Geo Duffield Jr
1828

ALEXANDER AND RUFUS;

OR A SERIES OF

DIALOGUES ON CHURCH COMMUNION,

IN TWO PARTS.

THE FIRST BEING A

VINDICATION OF SCRIPTURAL CHURCH COMMUNION

IN OPPOSITION TO LATITUDINARIAN SCHEMES.

THE SECOND BEING A

DEFENCE OF THE COMMUNION MAINTAINED

IN THE SECESSION CHURCH.

By John Cameron

Can two walk together, except they be agreed.....Amos iii. 3.

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PREFACE.

It is now held by many, that there may be several articles in the public profession of a particular church, which, however clearly founded on the holy scriptures, are not essential or necessary to salvation, and therefore ought not to be terms of church communion. "The "obviously vital doctrines of the gospel," say they, "which whoever "renounces cannot be a christian, are a sufficient basis of sacramental "communion." This scheme, under the plausible name of catholic and liberal communion, is much recommended in various popular writings of the present day, particularly, in a recent publication, entitled, *A Plea for Sacramental Communion on Catholic Principles.* This Plea the author pretends to found upon scriptural principles concerning the nature of the christian church, and upon approved examples of her sacramental communion in the times of the apostles, and in what have been termed, the first and second periods of the reformation. Though the scheme pleaded for seems not only contrary to the constitution and practice of the christian church, but even to the nature of human society; for it is obvious, that there are many things in the common order of any regular society, which cannot, in strictness, be deemed essential to its existence; and yet no person is admitted a member of it without consenting to the whole of that order. The publication now mentioned, by continually keeping the true state of the question out of sight, by the abuse of detached passages of scripture, by the pretence of being countenanced by human authorities, by pathetic declamation, and peremptory assertions, is remarkably calculated to seduce from the scriptural order of church communion, and to promote that laxness, which has too long prevailed in the protestant churches, and deprived them, in so great a measure, of their purity and true glory. Such an attempt, therefore, as is now submitted to the judgement of the public, seems to be a proper means, through the Divine blessing, of leading them to exercise their judgement in comparing, the scheme of sacramental communion so much extolled in this Plea, with the holy scriptures, and with the example of the church of Christ in former periods. Several just observations on Dr. Mason's Plea have been already offered to the public by the Rev. Messrs. Black and Rankin. But there seemed to be a peculiar call to consider the sub-

ject farther in its connexion with the Secession Testimony. The prevailing influence of latitudinarian tenets in the established church of Scotland occasioned the erection of the secession church. Hence Mr. Wilson of Perth, in his excellent *Defence of Reformation Principles*, justly exposes the lax principles of those who wrote in favour of the judicial proceedings of that church against the members of the associate presbytery. Mr. Willison's appearance against that presbytery, in what is entitled *his Impartial Testimony*, (which in many things respecting the Seceders certainly deserves to be termed *partial*.) was a native consequence of his joining with others in giving countenance to the ministrations of Mr. Whitefield, an eminent apostle of latitudinarianism. Though the objections in Mr. Willison's Testimony were answered materially by Mr. Wilson's Defence now mentioned, before he made them; and more formally by Mr. Gallatly afterwards; yet as these writings are now hardly to be met with, especially in this country; and as an edition of Mr. Willison's Testimony has been lately printed and dispersed here, a particular consideration of his objections was necessary.

The plans, now recommended with regard to the union of separate bodies of professing christians, call their attention to the subject of these Dialogues. For the pursuing of these plans will be either beneficial or destructive in their tendency, according as the scheme of communion which they lead the uniting parties to adopt, is consistent or not so, with the word of God and with faithfulness to his cause. In these conversations, while corruption is the native consequence of latitudinarian schemes, scriptural order in sacramental communion tends to make the visible church a heaven upon earth to the faithful, terrible as an army with banners to her enemies, and to her King and Head for a name, for a praise and for glory.

Some will perhaps blame the writer of these Dialogues for having attempted to revive old controversies. But it is too evident, that the errors, which occasioned the controversies here exhibited, still exist, either in the same form or in their bitter fruits. In the course of each of these controversies, there have been such precious examples of what the Lord has done, and of what he has enabled his servants to do and suffer for his cause, as ought never to be forgotten. Besides, a farther decision in favour of truth and duty which have been openly denied and reproached is to be expected from Zion's strong Redeemer, who will *thoroughly plead her cause*, and who will have the public injuries done to that cause acknowledged. In short, the writer would not have given a fair account of the Secession Testimony, if he had passed over any of these controversies in silence.

With regard to the form of dialogue, it was chosen by the writer as it seemed to suit better than continued discourse with the variety of subjects that were to be treated of. He is far from pretending, that these Dialogues are entitled to the praise of finished conversation-pieces. He has, however, endeavoured to avoid improprieties; and in the part of Alexander, the reader will observe a diversity of style and manner, as he constantly states the objections in the words of the writers from whom they were taken.

The Appendix to the second part contains observations on a variety of points belonging to what may be called *the present truth*, in which the people of God ought to be established.

The writer now leaves this work in the hands of Him, whose acceptance through Jesus Christ is the best reward of the labours of his servants; and on whose blessing all their success and usefulness depend. That the hearts of those who peruse these Dialogues may be warmed with love to the truths of God and to the peace of his church, is, through grace, the desire of their servant for Jesus' sake.

JOHN ANDERSON.

Servise, October 20th, 1820.

ALEXANDER AND RUFUS;

OR A SERIES OF

DIALOGUES ON CHURCH COMMUNION.

PART FIRST.

In which scriptural church communion is stated and vindicated in opposition to latitudinarian schemes.

Rom. xv. With one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinth. i. 10. I beseech you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement.

ALEXANDER AND RUFUS.

PART FIRST.

In which scriptural church communion is stated and vindicated in opposition to latitudinarian schemes.

DIALOGUE I.

The evil of divisions in the church.....Some separations from particular churches unlawful.....Secession from corrupt churches lawful.....False methods of healing divisions.....Scriptural church communion stated.....An approbation of the public profession of a particular church implied in the partaking of her sacramental communion.....The distinction between the essentials and the non-essentials of christianity, considered.

ALEXANDER and RUFUS were both ministers of the Presbyterian denomination; both desired the welfare of the church of Christ; but they had different views of the present state of the church, and of the means which ought to be used for promoting its welfare. Rufus considered it as his duty to warn his hearers against whatever he judged contrary to the word of God in the public profession and avowed practice of the various denominations of christians. Alexander, on the contrary, was careful to avoid controversy in his discourses addressed to the people. Satisfied with the declaration of those truths which he reckoned the more important, he seldom stated those which, he knew, were denied by other denominations, among Protestants; and said nothing of the sinfulness or danger of their errors. They lived near one another; and, notwithstanding their different opinions, they often had friendly interviews. One evening, as they took a walk together in the fields, they had the following conversation concerning church communion.

§ 1. *Alexander.* I have been much engaged for some time past in considering the evil of divisions in the church. By division the hearts of christians are alienated from one another; and instead of edifying conversation, they exhaust themselves in contentions and endless debates. Amidst this wrangling, the professors of the christian religion neglect the practice of it, and others are hardened in their open infidelity.

Rufus. The divisions of the church are greatly to be lamented, they are awful signs of the divine displeasure and presages of approaching judgments. But the radical evil of them is commonly overlooked, which consists in men's hatred of the truth revealed in the word of God, and in their refusing to be determined in matters of religion by his authority. When a division takes place, we should enquire, on which side truth is held in opposition to error. In the division between the Jews and the Samaritans, our Lord plainly determined, that the truth was held in the profession of the former, and not in that of the latter. *Ye worship, ye know not what*, said our Lord to the woman of Samaria: *we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.*

§ 2. The sin of those who separate from a particular church, because she faithfully censures them for avowing or propagating opinions contrary to the scriptures, or for persisting in sinful and offensive practices, is manifest. *These are they*, says the apostle Jude, *who separate themselves.* Such are all separations for maintaining Arian, Socinian, or Arminian tenets; or, for carrying on Episcopal or Independent schemes in the government of the church. Nor can they be justified or excused who make or keep up, a separation from the communion of a particular church from groundless prejudices, or from an attachment to local or ancient customs, for which no warrant can be found in the holy scriptures. Separation from a particular church is not always justifiable, on account of the real evils that may be found in her. Wrong steps in the public administration of her officers; or errors which she is evidently disposed to correct, and which she does not make a precedent for her future conduct, are no sufficient grounds of secession from her communion. A church may have many defects; and yet be in a reforming state: she may not be despising scriptural testimonies, that are given against her errors; nor neglecting any other means of attaining more conformity to the word of Christ, in doctrine, worship, and government: while this is the case, her remaining defects would not warrant us to make or continue a separation from her communion.

Alex. In my opinion, Rufus, separation from a particular church that can be justly called a true church of Christ, is almost always wrong. Whatever may be pretended, passion or prejudice is usually at the bottom of it.

§ 3. *Ruf.* You allow, however, that there are lawful separations from particular churches; such as our secession from the church of Rome.

Alex. With regard to the church of Rome, God has described her as Antichristian, as totally gone off from the foundation, impure in doctrine, idolatrous in worship, usurping and tyrannical in her government. She is called Sodom for filthiness, Babylon for pride and cruelty, and Egypt for darkness, idolatry and oppression. Hence the people of God are commanded to come out of her, that they may not partake of her plagues. I grant also that we ought not to have sacramental communion with a church or religious society, that imposes any sinful term of communion. But with regard to the regular Protestant churches, that have clearly expressed their orthodoxy in their confessions of faith; from these churches, although differing from us in some

external modes and forms, we never separated, and we ought not to reject their communion.

Ruf. You allow, sir, that the church communion which is offered upon sinful terms is to be avoided, but, as a Presbyterian, you must grant, that such are the terms upon which the church of England offers her communion; for she requires of all her members, (what they cannot submit to without sin,) an acknowledgment of the authority or lordship of the diocesan bishop over other pastors, and the observation of all the religious ceremonies appointed in her liturgy. Hence we may warrantably separate from her communion, though she be one of the regular Protestant churches. Nay, though a particular church should not expressly require any sinful terms of communion, it would be warrantable to withdraw from her communion on account of her obstinacy in holding error, or in refusing to make a public and particular profession and acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus, in opposition to the errors of the present time and the teachers of them: because something positive, particularly a public confession of the truths of God, that are openly denied, by such teachers is requisite in order to warrantable church communion; for the church, to which we may warrantably join ourselves, ought to be one which maintains and professes the true doctrine and the true faith; she ought to bear the character of the church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of truth. It would be unwarrantable for us to join in communion with a church whose members, for the most part, maintain and profess Arminian errors, or Arian blasphemies, though it were not required as a term of communion, that we should expressly approve such a profession. When corruption prevails in a particular church, the faithful, being the minor party, ought first to use means, such as, petitions, remonstrances, protestations, for reclaiming the majority. But if these means prove unavailing, and the corrupt majority obstinately persist in their defection from the purity of religion which the church had attained, it is then the duty of the faithful part of the society to withdraw from the corrupt majority. The ministers, particularly, of such a faithful party ought to do what is impracticable in conjunction with that majority; they ought to fulfil the ministry which they have received of the Lord, not only by every one, in his individual capacity, teaching sound doctrine and refuting the errors that prevail; but also by a joint exercise of the ministerial authority which the Lord hath given them, in condemning such errors, in asserting God's revealed truth in express opposition to them, and in thus exhibiting a judicial testimony; in order that they and the people adhering to them may appear as one confessing body, striving together with one mind for the faith of the gospel. When such is the prevailing corruption of a particular church, call it a regular protestant church, or what you will, the secession of those who are faithful in maintaining the cause of truth in opposition to the body of its ministers and other members, becomes lawful and necessary.

§ 4. *Alex.* These judicial declarations and testimonies, instead of healing, tend to increase our divisions.

Ruf. I am persuaded, however, that, while they are such as maintain no other doctrines than those contained in the word of God, they are of a healing tendency. For, these declarations and testimonies, in

specifying the errors which are propagated in the visible church, call men's attention to the true causes of her divisions, these cannot be healed, unless the causes of them be attended to and removed. Besides, they direct men to relinquish the false and deceitful methods of union which have been dictated by carnal policy; methods *of healing the wound* of God's people *slightly*,* or *of daubing with untempered mortar*.†

Alex. What are these methods which you censure with so much severity?

Ruf. One of them is that of the church of Rome, which requires all to agree in receiving implicitly the dictates of the church, that is, of a pope or council, or both, in matters of religion. But this scheme proceeds upon the supposition that the scriptures are not a perfect or not a plain rule of faith and practice; and leads us to found our faith on the authority of men instead of the authority of God.

Another method is that of allowing magistrates to compel their people to a particular profession of religion by civil penalties. This, as well as the popish scheme, attempts to deprive men of the liberty of judging for themselves in matters of religion; and supposes, that men may be made members of a particular church by military force. The civil magistrate as such, not being any officer in the church, has no right to administer its ordinances, and far less to prescribe its doctrines or the terms of its communion.

A third method, which obtains in the Greek and Roman, and in some measure in other churches, is that of attracting people to their communion by the charms of music and the use of ceremonies, which are recommended not only by ancient use and prescription, but by their effect on the imagination and passions, which govern the ignorant and unprincipled. But true church union is to be promoted by keeping the ordinances of God pure and entire, by the knowledge and love of divine truth.

The fourth method, which is highly extolled by many in our day, is that which directs all to join together in sacramental communion, who hold the essential articles of the christian religion; and which condemns the practice of those who refuse sacramental communion to any on account of their rejection, however open and obstinate, of non-essential articles of that religion; even though these articles be "important and worthy to be contended for with zeal and constancy."‡ This bears the specious and alluring name of catholic sacramental communion.

§ 5. *Alex.* What is your notion of church communion?

Ruf. I shall state what I believe to be the truth concerning that communion according to the scriptures. In the first place, the visible communion of christians in any particular church,‖ consists in their

* Jerem. vi. 14. † Ezek. xiii. 10, 11.

‡ Dr. Mason's Plea for Catholic Communion, p. 54.

‖ By *a particular church*, as the expression is used in these dialogues, is meant a part of the catholic church distinguished from other parts of it, not by the profession of a different doctrine, or by a different form of worship or government, all diversity in these respects being unwarrantable; but by local situation, and by having different ecclesiastical judicatories. The churches of Jerusalem, of Corinth, of Ephesus, of Rome, and others mentioned in the New Testament, were such particular churches.

declared agreement to adhere to one public profession of the christian religion, and in their joint endeavours to maintain and propagate that profession. As the agreement of citizens to support one civil government, may be called civil communion; and an agreement of a number of men to unite their efforts for the raising of a weight, or for the working of a ship, may be called mechanical communion; so the agreement of a number of christians to adhere to and maintain one profession of the christian religion, is religious or church communion. Hence the visible communion of christians is expressed in scripture by the holding fast of their profession, one profession only, not many or different professions;* by glorifying God with one mind and one mouth;† and serving him with one lip.‡ Their communion among themselves in the exercises of religious worship, and in all the other parts of their christian practice, belongs to the joint maintaining of one profession of the christian religion.

In the second place, this profession is a profession of the whole christian religion. We cannot warrantably decline the explicit profession of one jot or tittle of it; since the authority of the Divine Testimony, which binds us to receive any part, binds us equally to receive the whole. All that truly belongs to the christian religion was delivered by Christ as the great Prophet of the church; and the Divine injunction is, *Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.*‖

In the third place, while the profession of the christian religion attained by a particular church, as well as her practice, is imperfect; and while much of her profession is rejected by many bearing the christian name; it is necessary that the articles of her public profession, which are the matter of her communion, be ascertained with precision. In the common affairs of life, there can be no rational communion among any number of persons, unless the matter, about which they are to have communion, be exactly determined. Thus, if it be the raising of a heavy body, it is necessary, in order to communion in that work, to determine by what means it is to be raised; whether by a lever, for example, or by a pulley, or by an inclined plane. So in order to the communion of persons in a particular church, it is necessary that the articles of the public profession which she has attained and which constitute the matter of her communion, be ascertained by her creed, by her confession, or by her declaration and testimony; and that it should be one important part of the work of her ministers, in their public discourses, to explain and vindicate that profession. When a church is honest and faithful in the use of these means, it is easy to know what is the matter of her communion. Faithfulness, in this respect, is one principal mark by which a reforming, may be distinguished from a backsliding, church.

In the fourth place, every person who joins in the public ordinances of a particular church, and especially in the Lord's supper, declares, that he has communion with her in her public profession, as it is ascertained by such means, as those now mentioned; and acknowledges it to be his own profession. For the public profession that is made in the participation of the public ordinances of christianity, can be only

* Heb. iv. 14. x. 23. † Rom. xv. 6. ‡ Zephan. iii. 9. margin. ‖ Acts, iii. 22.

one; that is, the profession of the particular church in which these ordinances are administered.

In fine, persons cannot reasonably pretend to have communion with a particular church in her public ordinances, and especially in the Lord's supper, while they openly persist in an obstinate opposition to any article of her profession. Persons may indeed share in that communion, who have but a small measure of knowledge: as they may have communion in a secular affair, who have little influence or opportunity of promoting it; but obstinate opposers can have no communion in it at all.

These principles are agreeable to the representation which the apostle gives of the partakers of the Lord's supper. *We being many*, says he, *are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.** According to these words our participation of one bread in this ordinance imports a joint profession of the christian religion; just as partaking of the sacrifices in the idol's temple imported a joint profession of idolatry. As christians, in receiving the Lord's supper, partake of one bread; so they make one profession of the christian religion. The profession of receiving Christ, as tendered in the Lord's supper, is a profession of the whole christian religion. For it is a profession, not only that we rely on Christ as a Priest for pardon; but that we fully assent to all that he teaches us as a Prophet; and that we cordially submit to all the laws and ordinances which he has delivered to us as our King.

The catholic scheme of sacramental communion, which you mentioned, differs from that of the apostle in two respects: First, a public profession of the whole christian religion is necessary to the sacramental communion of the apostle, for it implies a joint profession of receiving Christ as tendered to the partakers. Whereas, the public profession of those parts only of the christian religion, which are termed essential, is necessary to sacramental communion, according to this catholic scheme. Secondly, the public profession of each communicant is the profession of all who partake of the same sacramental bread, according to the apostle. But according to this catholic scheme, the public profession of some of the partakers may be different from, and in some respects opposite to, the profession of the rest.

The profession of religion which is made by the partakers of the Lord's supper in any particular church is to be considered, either as a *merely* personal, or as a joint profession. If it be considered as *merely* personal, or as the profession of each individual *only*, there may be as many different professions as there are partakers; and there will be no communion at all in the same profession. On this supposition, the apostle could not have justly inferred from their partaking of that one bread, that they are one body. But if the profession made in the act of communicating be a social or joint profession; then it must be the profession of the society or particular church, by whose ministers this ordinance is dispensed. No other public profession of the christian religion is or can be made in the act of communicating in that particular church.

* 1 Corinth. x. 17.

Alex. The case of occasional sacramental communion, has been compared to that of a christian invited by his pagan neighbour to an entertainment, stated by the apostle in the chapter from which you have just now quoted a passage.* If the pagan, having set meat before his guest, say, *this* meat is a sacrifice to an idol god, the christian ought not *to eat*; a condition that was not mentioned in the invitation, is introduced; a condition which would make the christian, if he should eat, a partaker of his neighbour's sin. But if no such thing is intimated by his pagan host, he may freely eat, asking no questions for conscience sake. So if I sit down at the table of the Lord in any other church, or receive one of her members to that holy table in my own, neither my act nor his can fairly be construed as more than an act of communion in the body and blood of the Lord; while this act is not coupled with an express or known† condition, which is sinful.

Ruf. The case you refer to, as stated by the apostle, seems to me very different from the occasional communion, of which you speak. In the case alluded to, the christian had no reason to consider an entertainment, not in a temple, but in a private house, not professedly in honour of any idol, but for bodily refreshment or civility, as connected with idolatry, unless he had received the intimation from his host which the apostle mentions. But no intelligent person who considers the necessary connexion between the dispensation of public ordinances in any particular church, and the public profession of that church, and how the former belongs to the latter, (both constituting one whole, of which whatever is professed by that church is a part,) can be at any loss to apprehend the danger of sacramental communion with that church, while her corruption in doctrine, worship and government, is such as renders secession from her necessary. Such an occasional communion is rather like the case represented by the apostle in the same chapter,‡ of the christian who is invited to partake of the sacrifices offered to idols in a pagan temple. I do not say, that this occasional communion is as grossly criminal, as the partaking of the sacrifices in these temples; but I say, that there is as little need of an intimation to be made to any person concerning the profession of a particular church with which he proposes to communicate, as there was, in the apostle's time, of an intimation to be made to a person concerning the design of the sacrifices in an idolatrous temple. And as a christian's partaking of the idolatry of the heathens was justly inferred from his eating the sacrifices in their temples; so a person's consenting to the profession, however corrupt, of a particular church, is justly inferred from his sacramental communion with that church.

Alex. It is granted, that sacramental communion implies unity; but not in these things wherein one section of the catholic church is distinguished from another. To be united in these things, is to be united in a sect. Such unity is necessary to sectarian communion; but christian unity, or union in Christ, is a sufficient reason for all christian communion.‖

Ruf. The catholic church comprehends all that profess the true religion. There is a lawful and necessary division of it into sections in

* 1 Corinth. x. 27, 28. † Dr. Mason's Plea for Catholic Communion, p. 332.

‡ 1 Corinth. x. 20, 21. ‖ Plea for Catholic Communion, page, 359.

respect of local situation. But when a number of people, bearing the christian name, combine together as a distinct society, for the purpose of maintaining and propagating doctrines and practices, which, instead of belonging to the true religion, are contrary to it; they ought not, considered as such a combination, to be called a lawful section of the catholic church. It is not denied, that they belong to the catholic church; but it is denied, that there ought to be any such section or division in it. Thus, there ought to be no section of the catholic church, having for the peculiar end of its distinct subsistence, the support of an episcopal hierarchy, unknown in the scripture, or the propagation of antipædobaptism, or of antiscriptural doctrine, in opposition to that of God's election, redemption, effectual calling and the conservation of his people, as delivered in the scripture; or for the support of ways and means of divine worship not found in scripture. If the catholic visible church were brought to a suitable discharge of her duty, she would abolish all such sections. But no society ought to be called such an unlawful section, while it can be shewn that it subsists as a separate society for no other end, than for the maintaining of something in the doctrine, worship or government of the church which belongs to the christian religion as delivered in the word of God, or for exhibiting a testimony against prevailing errors and corruptions which the scripture requires the catholic church to condemn. Such a profession of any party of christians is no sectarian profession; and an union with them is not a sectarian, but properly a christian union; and, being cordial and sincere, is a union in Christ; and communion upon the ground of this union is truly christian communion. On the other hand, however much of our holy religion any body of christians hold in common with others, and however many of them we may charitably judge to be saints, yet while their distinguishing profession is contrary to the word of God, communion with them, as a body so distinguished, is sectarian communion; as it implies a union with them in that which ought to be rejected by the whole catholic church.

Alex. There is no argument for the communion of different congregations, founded upon their union in one sect, which is not equally good for the communion of the sects themselves, on account of their union in one church-catholic. To maintain the necessity of amalgamating different sects into one sect, in order to communion among their members, is to maintain the necessity of amalgamating different congregations into one congregation for that end.*

Ruf. Several parts indeed of the catholic visible church, particularly, congregations under one presbytery, may warrantably hold sacramental communion together; because they all make the same profession of the faith; they are one bread, one body. But this is not an argument for, but against sacramental communion between many other parts of the catholic church; as between Papists and Protestants, between Socinians and Calvinists, between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, between those who are obstinately and openly declining from certain points of reformation already attained and those who are endeavouring to adhere to them. For these parties contradict one another in their public profession; and therefore cannot sincerely say;

* Plea for Catholic Communion, page, 361.

we are one body, one bread; we will glorify God with one mind and with one mouth.

It is evident then, that the same argument, that is, the same union in one profession, which warrants the communion of congregations with one another, condemns sacramental communion between those, who, though they belong to the same catholic visible church, make professions of the faith contradictory to one another. Thus, there is no necessity for what you call amalgamating different congregations into one, in order to render communion between them warrantable. It is only requisite, that these church members agree in making the same profession of the faith, and in a corresponding practice. Upon this ground they may all have edifying and comfortable communion together in sealing ordinances, however many different worshipping congregations they may severally belong to.

§ 6. *Alex.* It has been proposed, as the true and only safe rule of interpreting social communion, that it should always go as far as the acts that express it, but is not necessary to be extended farther; and that no particular act of communion is to be interpreted as reaching beyond itself; unless it be coupled with other acts by an express or known condition.*

Ruf. Whatever is an express or known end for which any particular church is erected and supported, is necessarily to be considered as an express and known condition of sacramental communion with that church. For none ought to partake of the peculiar privileges of any society, but such as are friendly to the known ends, for which it subsists; and therefore in partaking of these privileges, persons are to be considered as professing to be so. On this principle, the apostle condemned christians, who ate and drank in the Pagan temples as chargeable with idolatry. The public profession of any particular church declares the peculiar end for which it subsists as a distinct and separate body from other churches. This is the public profession of the ministers of that particular church, and of all that sit down along with them at the Lord's table declaring themselves to be one bread, one body. This is the only true and safe rule of interpreting social communion. According to this rule, there is no adventitious condition coupled with the act of communicating; there is nothing introduced but what is necessarily implied in the act itself as a social act, the act of the society or particular church in which the Lord's supper is dispensed. In this interpretation there is no more communion supposed, than what the act of communicating in any particular church expresses; no going beyond that.

Alex. If the sacramental table were only the property of such a particular church, then her officers might require an approbation of the peculiar ends of her erection and subsistence, as a term of admission to her own table. But as it is the Lord's table, and not hers, his people have a right to a seat at it without complying with such a condition.†

Ruf. Your objection would be of weight on the supposition, that the ends, for which a particular church is erected and subsists as such, are only of human device and appointment. But if these ends be no

* Plea for Catholic Communion, p. 332. † Plea, &c. p. 19.

other than those which are declared, in the holy scriptures, to be the ends for which Christ erected his church; such as, that the doctrine of Christ may be purely preached; that there may be no mixture of human inventions in the worship of God; that the sacraments may be rightly administered; that the officers of the church, her government and discipline, may be such as Christ hath appointed, and no other; then whoever openly opposes any of these ends, acts, in that respect, contrary to the will and command of the Lord Jesus; and while he is obstinate in his opposition to any thing acknowledged by a particular church to be one of the ends for which Christ erected his church, he cannot be, in his public profession, one bread, one body, with those who publicly profess, that the very thing which he opposes is one of these ends: and therefore he cannot be a regular partaker of the Lord's supper, as dispensed in such a particular church: and no one has a right to be an irregular, or disorderly partaker.

Alex. When I communicate with a particular church, I acknowledge her to be a true church of Christ. I acknowledge her sacramental table for his own ordinance, where it is my duty to shew forth his death, and my privilege to look for a blessed experience of its benefits. This, all this I acknowledge cheerfully, without following her, directly or indirectly, in things in which she does not follow Christ.*

Ruf. This acknowledgment must mean either your public profession, or the secret intention of your mind in the act of communicating. It cannot mean your public profession in the act of receiving the Lord's supper as dispensed in any particular church; for the public profession you make in that act, as it is a social act, can be nothing different, either in quantity or quality, from that of your fellow communicants, or from that of the particular church with which you communicate; and therefore it cannot be a profession of some things, such as the particulars you have mentioned, exclusive of other things belonging to the profession of that church. Nor can it be a profession you have made at any other time or place; for, according to your own rule, the profession, made in communicating, should go no farther than the acts that express it. But supposing that your acknowledgment means the secret intention of the mind, it cannot prevent your public profession from being the same with that of the particular church with which you communicate: nor can it exempt you from a participation in those parts of her public profession, in which she does not follow Christ. I know, my friend abhors the nefarious doctrine of the Jesuits about mental reservation and the direction of the intention. But if you should suppose, that by secret acknowledgments in your own mind your public act of communicating with a corrupt church is altered, and freed from that participation, which naturally belongs to it, in the evil as well as in the good of her public profession, your scheme would certainly resemble that of the Jesuits, which is so successfully ridiculed in Pascal's celebrated Provincial Letters. If a Jesuit had proposed, on some account or another, to partake of the Lord's supper in a heretical church, he would have reasoned with himself in this manner: "I know well, that my joining with that church in the public and so-"cial act of communicating is an acquiescing in her whole profession: "Nay, it is all the profession I can make in the solemn act of commu-

* Plea, &c. p. 333, 334.

"nicating with her. It is an act that makes her public profession my "own. This I cannot do without making some distinction; and there "is no public distinction between my act of communicating and that "of the firmest members of this heretical church. But since my af-"fairs require me to join in this act, I resolve, in order to satisfy con-"science, to make a distinction secretly in my own mind: I will puri-"fy my act of communicating with this heretical church by a right di-"rection of my intention. In the first place, I intend to acknowledge "nothing of the heretical part of the public profession of this church "by my public and social act of communicating with her: thus my in-"tention is rightly directed; no matter how contrary it may appear to "the natural import of that act. In the second place, I intend, by "my act, of communicating with this heretical church, to acknowledge "what is right in her profession, such as, that it is a duty to celebrate "the eucharist and my privilege to look for experience of its benefits. "Such right things belonging to their profession, I intend to acknowl-"edge; but no more. It is true, no human understanding can discov-"er this limitation from my act of communicating; and these heretics "will be led to mistake me for one of their own party. But this is "only a small matter of dissimulation, which will be abundantly jus-"tified by being directed to a good end. In the third place, I intend "to make a better profession of religion in time and place convenient." Thus men often feed on ashes; a deceived heart turns them aside, and they refuse to enquire after the lie that is in their right hand. Is not this the case, when men set themselves strenuously to maintain the lawfulness of a public and social act, which, in its own nature, necessarily implies an approbation of a profession including particulars, in which there is not a following of the Lord Jesus, but a departure from his cause? The scripture shews us, in many examples, the danger of doing evil, or of countenancing it, under the pretext of some important duty; as, in Saul's not waiting for Samuel, from a pretended zeal for the divine ordinance of offering sacrifice; and his sparing Agag and the spoil of the Amalekites, on a similar pretence; and in the case of Uzzah (who appears to have been a good man) putting his hand to the ark, in order to prevent its falling. The Lord forbids Judah to go up to Gilgal, or to swear *The Lord liveth*; though their doing so was, in itself, a commanded duty, Jerem. iv. 2. Yet their doing it in communion with the ten tribes is forbidden, Hosea, iv. 15. They who have justly withdrawn from the communion of any particular church on account of its corruptions; and yet allow themselves in the practice of occasional communion with that church in her public ordinances, are far more involved in the guilt of its corruptions, than Naaman the Syrian was, in the guilt of worshipping Rimmon, when he bowed in the temple of that idol: for they cannot pretend, that communion with such a church is no end of their attendance on her public ordinances; as Naaman pleaded, that his intention, in going to the temple of Rimmon and being present there, was not to worship the idol, but to serve his master. Grotius, indeed, and some other commentators, justify or excuse the conduct of Naaman. But more candid interpreters hold that the indulgence, which Naaman desired, was unlawful; that there was such an appearance of evil, such a countenancing of idolatry in it, as he ought to have avoided, that his

presence in the temple of Rimmon in the time of the worship of that idol, was a dangerous example to others; that, on such an occasion, he ought either to have obtained leave of absence from his master, or to have quitted his service; and that even his desire of pardon intimated his consciousness of something sinful in this matter.

Alex. If communicating, as a guest with another church, involves in an approbation of her sins, by the same rule communicating with my own church involves in an approbation of hers; and renders me so much the more inexcusable, by how much a transient act of intercourse with a church in her corruptions, whether great or small, is less culpable, than that regular and habitual intimacy with her which is unavoidable by her members. Whence it will follow, that there can be no lawful communion upon earth, and that the most exceptionable and criminal form in which it can possibly exist, is communion with one's own church; while a corruption or abuse is to be found in her skirts.*

Ruf In considering this matter, it is necessary to distinguish between the corruptions that are in a particular church; that is, such corruptions as are found in many of her members, and such as are adopted and maintained by the church considered in its ecclesiastical capacity. Thus, when Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, there were many errors and disorders in their church; yet they were not adopted as a part of their public profession. That epistle, in treating of the error concerning the resurrection, represents it as a saying *of some among them*, not as the saying of the church in its judicial or representative capacity; and therefore a person might then have communicated with that church, without being chargeable with consenting to that error. But the case of one's communicating with a church, which had adopted that erroneous opinion as a part of its profession, would have been quite different: especially, if that church were holding it, in opposition to a testimony for the truth exhibited by another ecclesiastical body. Communicating in such a case would be evidently a falling away from an open profession of the truth concerning the resurrection, and from a faithful testimony against the contrary error.

Thus, the reason why communicating with the episcopal church, would render us chargeable with a public consenting to Episcopacy, is not, because some, or many members in that church, hold such an opinion; but, because it is an article of its profession; an article on which its existence as a distinct ecclesiastical body depends. For the same reason, our communicating with the Methodist church, which is distinguished by its denial of the doctrines of absolute predestination, particular redemption, and the final perseverance of the saints, would involve us in the guilt of declining from the profession of these truths, and in that of publickly admitting the contrary errors.

I am as far as any from allowing, with the Brownists in the seventeenth century, that communicants, acting conscientiously, are defiled; or that the ordinance of the Lord's supper is rendered unprofitable to them, by the personal sins of fellow communicants, or by any accidental abuse that may take place in a particular church, which the most faithful endeavours may not be able always to prevent. This opinion is well confuted by judicious divines, such as Durham and

* Plea, &c. p. 326, 327.

Rutherford, who wrote against these separatists. But it is on a very different account, that I disapprove a person's occasional communion with a particular church, whose profession, as it denies some of the truths, and changes some of the ordinances of the Lord Jesus, is directly opposite to the profession of the particular church, of which that person considers himself a member. I disapprove of such occasional communicating, because thereby the person declares the profession, he had condemned, to be now his own profession: in this case, he either renounces his former profession of the truth, or he is guilty of duplicity and falsehood.

It seems to be a principle of common sense, that no person should partake of the peculiar privileges of any society, unless he falls in with all the declared ends, for which that society has been erected, and subsists: and, therefore, a person should not communicate with a particular church, if he disapproves of any of the ends, for which it subsists as a distinct professing body of christians. This principle is no bar to the communion of christians: it only requires, that all the ends for which a particular church subsists, as a distinct professing body, should be such as are warranted by the word of God. The errors and corruptions of persons or parties in a church; while they are not justified and maintained by her in her ecclesiastical capacity, nor have become any part of her public profession, do not necessarily belong to the profession which is made in the act of communicating with her. But the profession of the faith, which is made in that act, if it is not the profession of the particular church which administers the sacramental ordinance, will be no joint profession at all. If there be no joint profession of the faith in the act of communicating, we cannot know, that we have any communion with others in receiving the same Saviour: for we can have no such communion with others, but so far as we know, that they voluntarily join with us in receiving him. But, we cannot know this otherwise than by their public profession, which profession can be no other in the act of receiving the Lord's supper, than the profession of the particular church, in which it is administered.

Alex. If the communion of the church is to be interpreted as an approbation of her sins, then by the same rule, communion with an individual is to be interpreted, as an approbation of his sins. It avails nothing to say, that, as the sacrament of the supper is an act of the church in her social character, we do, by the very fact of communion with her, acknowledge her as a whole; and thus by implication at least, put the seal of our approbation to whatever belongs to her as a church. For the difficulty is precisely where it was. I must also take an individual as a whole. His communicating is an act of the whole man. If I cannot, for the purpose of communion, separate the Divine ordinances in a church from her corruptions, how can I thus separate the graces of a christian from his sins? If by communion with her in God's ordinances, I must participate in her corruptions also, how can I commune with a believer in his faith and love, and not participate in the sin that dwelleth in him? Your objection cuts up all communion of saints by the very roots.

Ruf. I have already shewn, in what sense communicating with any church makes a person partaker in her corruptions. It is not meant, that communicating with a particular church implies an approbation of

all the sins she is chargeable with; communion with her does not imply an approbation, as has been already observed, of the sins or corruptions, which, though they may be found in individuals, and in parties, among those belonging to her, are not yet maintained in her public profession; and far less does it imply approbation of such sins or corruptions as are not justified, but acknowledged and lamented. It is only meant, that the act of communicating with a particular church involves a person in the same approbation of her sins and corruptions, that is included in her public profession, and in the declared ends for which she subsists as a distinct professing body of christians.

With regard to an individual believer, the case is still the same; we can have no religious communion with him but by means of his profession. Now, if his profession contains not only a declaration of his faith and love, but also a justification of in-dwelling sin; we could not lawfully have communion with him in such a profession.

But if you say, that persons in partaking of the Lord's supper, or of any other public ordinance, have no communion with the other partakers in their profession; you do indeed cut up the communion of saints in the visible church by the very roots.

§ 7. *Alex.* It is not denied, that sacramental communion implies agreement in visible christianity; that is, in a profession and practice becoming the gospel, without regard to sectarian differences, which consist with the substance of evangelical truth.

Ruf. What is meant by visible christianity? Is it the profession made by the particular church with which we communicate? Or is it the profession of some other particular church?

Alex. It does not comprehend all the articles belonging to the profession of any particular church. For the whole profession of any particular church must have some articles which distinguish it from the profession of other true churches.

Ruf. It seems then that the profession of your own church is a sectarian profession. But, passing this, I wish to know, whether this visibly christianity includes all the doctrines and duties of the christian religion.

Alex. I wonder, that you put such a question. If it comprehended them all; then the profession of these true churches, which have this visible christianity would be perfect, and they would be one; whereas you know their lamentable errors and divisions. It is also granted, that, besides the essentials, there are other articles held by the churches as belonging to the christian religion, which are justly accounted "important and worthy to be contended for with zeal and constancy."

Ruf. You call this scheme of religion, which is professed in your catholic communion, visible christianity; yet it seems not very visible to a common discernment. It seems, it is neither the whole religion of the bible, nor the religion professed by any particular church.

Alex. Visible christianity means the essentials of the christian religion.

Ruf. The darkness is nothing abated by this representation of the matter, unless it were shewn what articles of the christian religion are, and what are not, to be accounted essential. For my own part, I have no distinct conception of any other visible adherence, by any

person or society, to the christian religion, than that which is according to some particular profession of it; that is, a visible or professed adherence, not only to some parts, but to the whole of that religion.

Alex. Are there not various passages of scripture, in which certain articles of truth are represented as fundamental and necessary to salvation? As, for example, 1 Cor. iii. 11. *Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* 1 John, iv. 2. *Every spirit, that confesseth, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.* John, xvii. 3. *This is eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Rom. x. 9. *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* Heb. vi. 2. *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.* 1 Tim. iii. 16. *And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world.*

Ruf. It may be observed, that these texts you have quoted cannot be rightly understood, without admitting other truths which are not expressed, but necessarily supposed or implied in them. Thus the knowledge of Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent, implies many truths not expressed; such as, that he is both God and man in one person; that he bears the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king. Now an assent to the words, (that is, an assent to all that many allow to be fundamental,) by those, who openly deny the true and necessary import of them, can be no proper ground of sacramental communion. Farther, if, by fundamentals here, we understand what is most necessary to salvation in every period; some of the particulars mentioned in these texts seem not to be so fundamental as others: Thus, baptisms and the laying on of hands, are not so much so as repentance from dead works and faith towards God. Besides, it may be observed, that, when the truths contained in the passages you have recited are said to be connected with salvation, and to belong to the foundation and mystery of godliness; it is not meant, that these predicates or commendations belong so exclusively to the truths mentioned in such texts, as not to belong to other truths proposed without any such predicates: such as, *That the Father and the Son are one; that when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly; that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law; that we are saved by grace through faith.* But the expressions in the texts you have quoted, declaring the importance of the truths contained in them, appear to have been occasioned by the opposition made to them, or by the temptations christians were under to forget or neglect them. In short, it cannot be inferred from such commendations added to some revealed truths, that the profession of other revealed truths, by those with whom we ought to have sacramental communion, is not indispensably necessary.

Alex. Some have attempted to enumerate the fundamental articles of religion.

Ruf. But it appears, that neither the design nor the success of such attempts invites us to imitate their example. The Racovian or Socinian catechism, reduces the *credenda*, or things necessary to be believed, to six: namely, That there is a God; that he is one; that he is eternal; that he is perfectly just; that he is perfectly wise; and that he is perfectly powerful. Many Arminians supposed, that all religion was comprehended in three points: The belief of the Divine promises; obedience to the Divine precepts; and the reverence due to the scriptures. It is obvious, that these enumerations, in which the peculiar doctrines of the christian religion are not mentioned, cannot, with any propriety, be called an enumeration of the fundamentals of that religion. We may, however, make an observation on the Arminian enumeration, which is applicable to some other lists that have been given of fundamentals. The Arminians say, that the things necessary to be known and believed, in order to salvation, are very few; only three things. But each of these things includes many particulars. The Divine precepts, for example, are comprehended in the ten commandments. But that the truths concerning sin and duty, which are comprised in each of these commandments, are exceedingly numerous, appears sufficiently in every tolerable explanation of them. And does not a reverential regard to the scriptures comprehend a reverential regard to every doctrine, command or promise contained in the scriptures, whether fundamental or not so? Thus the essentials, enumerated in this and other lists, rightly understood, are found to include non-essentials. Thus men's attempts to draw the line between essentials, and non-essentials; to separate what God has revealed as one and indivisible; produce nothing but vanity, confusion, and contradiction. Some have considered the twelve articles of what is called the Apostles' Creed, as an enumeration of the essentials of the christian religion: but this creed, if it is understood according to Ruffinus, or any other judicious expositor of it, comprehends a great multitude of particular doctrines. The articles of this creed, considered as an exhibition of the essentials of the christian religion, are defective, while the important doctrines of original sin, and that of the covenant of grace, that of the union of believers to Christ, and other fundamental doctrines are not mentioned. They are also redundant, as it is not evident, that the understanding of Christ's descent into hell, as there stated, is essential.

Alex. It has been said, that no church should require an assent to any proposition which is not found in the express words of scripture; and that no inference or deduction from the words of scripture can be a lawful term of communion.

Ruf. This supposition seems to be at variance with the opinion, that a church should not require as a term of communion any other profession, than that of fundamental truths; the knowledge of which is absolutely necessary to salvation. For if, according to the opinion you have stated, a church's warrant for requiring of those, whom she admits to her communion, their assent to any proposition, is, because it is found in the express words of scripture, then the knowledge of many truths might be required as terms of communion, which, no one will say, are fundamental in the sense now mentioned: such as, that Paul shore his head at Cenchrea; or that he left his cloak at Troas; because

these propositions are found in the express words of scripture. On the other hand, according to this supposition, truths, that have the best title to be ranked among the fundamentals, might be expunged from the list of the church's terms of communion: such as, that the Holy Spirit is a person of the Godhead distinct from the Father and the Son; and that *it is the* personal property of the Holy Spirit to proceed from the Son as well as from the Father. According to this supposition, the church of God, while it had only the five books of Moses, must have tolerated the denial of the resurrection from the dead; because, though, as our Lord shews, this doctrine is really contained in these books; yet it is not expressed in so many words. Whatever is justly deduced from the words of scripture, belongs to the true meaning, which God intended to communicate by the words; and which we ought to know and believe. The church and her members are bound, not only to read, but to search the scriptures: and whatever doctrines or duties they have found to be contained in the import of the words in any part of scripture, according to the scope of the place and the analogy of faith, they are to adopt as a part of their public profession: what they have thus attained, they are to hold fast as a church; nor ought they afterward to join with the obstinate opposers of such an article in sacramental communion. It has ever been the approved practice of the church of Christ, to use and apply the scripture, as the rule of her proceedings, by deducing consequences from the words of it. Thus, in the beginning of the New Testament dispensation, it was required as a term of communion with the church, that persons should profess their assent to this truth, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God. This verbal proposition is not to be found in the Old Testament, which was then the whole written word of God. But it was deduced as a necessary consequence from the words of it. On the same principle, the renunciation of Arian and Pelagean opinions was afterwards required of those who sought the communion of the church: and, in like manner, abstaining from gambling, promiscuous dancing, attendance on stageplays, though these evils are not expressly mentioned in the scriptures, was required.

Alex. Such inferences and deductions, however just and necessary, are not formally binding on the consciences of christians, farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that the propositions inferred express the doctrine of God's word.

Ruf. That it is our duty to believe the doctrines necessarily implied, as well as those that are literally expressed in the words of scripture, appears from our Lord's reproving the Sadducees for their not believing the resurrection, as contained in the words which God spoke to Moses out of the bush; and also reproving his disciples *as fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken;* for their not perceiving, in his sufferings and death, the fulfilment of what the prophets had spoken. It does not follow from a person's not actually perceiving a doctrine, which is necessarily implied in the words of scripture, that his conscience is not bound to know and believe that doctrine: because his not perceiving it must be owing to the natural blindness of his mind, to his aversion to the light of God's word, or to some contrary prejudice, to which he is obstinately attached. *The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolish-*

ness to him, neither can he know them: yet it is unquestionably his duty to know and receive the things of the Spirit of God. The church may judge, whether a person's public profession of religion accords with the scriptures, and with the general tenor of his practice, as far as it comes under their observation; but how far it accords with his inward conviction and perception of evidence, they cannot judge. Hence it follows, that the church must be regulated by the former, and not by the latter, in determining with whom her members ought to join in sacramental communion.

Alex. After all, the distinction between the essentials and non-essentials of our most holy religion cannot be abolished; and that it is attended with important consequences, no man of sober sense will deny.*

Ruf. It is granted, that the distinction, between the first principles of the oracles of God, and other Divine truths, is necessary to be attended to in teaching the doctrines of the christian religion in their due order and connection; and also, in forming a judgment of charity concerning particular churches and their members; that we may bless God for whatever is agreeable to his holy word in their profession and practice. This distinction, as it shews what errors and sins are more heinous and pernicious than others, should excite us to guard against the least, as leading to the greatest. But then it is greatly abused, when it leads us to make little account of some of the doctrines and commands of God's word, under the notion of their not being essential. The scheme of joining in church communion with all churches and persons who hold the essentials, cannot well be denied to have a tendency to that abuse. As our cultivating the most particular and habitual intimacy and friendship with persons openly and incorrigibly addicted to any vice, must have a native tendency to lessen or even to annihilate our sense of the evil of that vice; so the practisers of occasional communion with churches that deny what they term the non-essential articles of the christian religion, will, of course, become more and more insensible of the sin and danger of denying such articles.

Alex. All the members of the human body belong to its perfection, and have their peculiar uses. Yet a toe does not hold the same place in the system with an arm or a leg; nor an arm or leg the same place with the head or heart. A person may lose a limb and yet be active, useful, honored, happy. But if a man be run through the heart, he dies. So if a man, for whatever cause, renounce the obviously vital doctrines of the gospel, he cannot be a christian. These doctrines, therefore, must be the basis of all christian communion. While persons maintain these doctrines pure and entire, holding the head Christ Jesus, they may and should have open fellowship with each other, and ought not to refuse each other on account of inferior differences.†

Ruf. That there are some doctrines of the christian religion, more essential and necessary to salvation than others, is not denied. It is also evident, that the denial of such doctrines is peculiarly pernicious. But it does not follow, that we may lay it down as a rule, that sacramental communion is to be held with all that retain the essential doctrines and duties of the christian religion. Because, before this could be admitted as a rule, it would be necessary to determine, whether an

* Plea, &c. page 100. † Id. page 104, 105.

assent to all the essential articles of our holy religion, or only to some of them, be required. In either case, they can be no rule to us, till we know precisely what they are.

Alex. Without any nice and subtle discrimination between the essentials and non-essentials of christianity, they may be distinguished with sufficient accuracy for every practical purpose. You are in no danger of mistaking a man's arm for his finger, his head for his foot; nor of supposing, that they are equally important to his life. As one cannot imagine for one moment, that the question, whether Christ purchased temporal benefits, or not, for all mankind? is like the question, Whether he bought his people unto God by his blood, in making a true, proper and meritorious sacrifice for sin, when, through the eternal Spirit, he offered up himself? Nor that dispute, Whether the covenant of redemption be different from the covenant of grace? or, what is so called, be really one and the same covenant, viewed under different aspects? is to be classed with the dispute, Whether Jesus the Lord our righteousness is a mere man like ourselves, or the true God, and therefore eternal life.*

Ruf. If it be once admitted as a rule, that we should communicate with all who hold the essentials of christianity; then it will not be sufficient to point out some of the least important of the non-essentials; and, to say, that these are easily distinguished from some of the most obviously fundamental doctrines. For if you receive any into sacramental communion on this ground, that the truths or duties they deny are non-essentials; then you cannot, without being chargeable with partiality, refuse that communion to others on account of the multitude or importance of the non-essentials which they reject, or on account of the obstinacy with which they reject them. According to your rule, they have a right to communicate with you, though they renounce the non-essentials, which lie nearest the fundamentals; and you will be in danger of receiving into communion those who deny the closely connected fundamentals, unless you distinguish with the utmost precision. You may smile; but, if you allow me to use your own simile, I can scarcely help saying, that, in this matter, there is a danger of mistaking the head for the foot; there is a danger of being induced by this scheme to think, that we may have communion with such as deny the Deity and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, as well as with those who hold other errors. Such great men as Grotius, Episcopus, Limborch were led to think so, by the notion they entertained of a general communion among christians. Such as plead for catholic communion, have generally allowed that it might be extended to Arminians: and no one acquainted with their system and their history, needs to be told how closely they are connected, and how ready they are to have church communion, with the Socinians.

The denial of the necessary and eternal Sonship of Christ as the second person in the Godhead, an opinion, which now prevails much even among those who profess to be Calvinists, is contrary to the scripture doctrine of the Trinity; as that opinion plainly implies that there is no necessary personal distinction in the Godhead revealed in scripture: for the Sonship of Christ can be no such distinction, if it depend upon his office as Mediator. An error may be far more dangerous,

* Plea, &c. page 105, 106.

than it appears to be upon a slight and superficial view of it. So the notion of Christ's having purchased for all mankind the common benefits of life, duly considered, may be found to be more inconsistent with the fundamental doctrine of Christ's suretyship for a certain number of mankind, as declared in scripture, than you have imagined. So the more we search the scripture, we may come to see more clearly that the consideration of the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption as two different covenants, is inconsistent with the unity, the immutability, and the freeness of that everlasting covenant.

It is not even safe to say, that an article of Divine truth is a non-essential, because it has sometimes not been duly acknowledged by some of the saints. Peter, on a certain occasion, did not duly acknowledge the necessity of Christ's death for the salvation of his people, Matth. xvi. 21, 22. The disciples doubted of Christ's resurrection, John xx. 9. A true believer, says Mr. Rutherford, may fall in temptation, so as to deny this or that fundamental article.*

In short, the want of precision in drawing the line, between the essentials and the non-essentials of christianity, is an objection against making this distinction a rule of sacramental communion, which has not yet been, and which, I am persuaded, never will be satisfactorily answered.

Alex. It would be improper to attempt answering it at present, after our conversation has been so much protracted. But, I hope, the good providence of God will afford us farther opportunities of continuing our examination of the question concerning catholic communion.

DIALOGUE II.

The scheme of catholic communion now pleaded for, inconsistent with the regard due to all the truths of God.... This scheme unwarrantable on account of the uncertainty of the grounds on which it proceeds.....The evils tolerated by this catholic communion, not matters of mutual forbearance according to the scriptures.....Confessions of faith justly considered as terms of church communion.....The catholic communion pleaded for, inconsistent with the due exercise of church discipline.

ALEXANDER one day met with RUFUS, where a company of militia were going through the military exercises. After the usual salutations, Alexander observed, that he took a pleasure in seeing our young countrymen improving themselves in tactics, which they might afterward have occasion to employ against an invading enemy.

Ruf. With how much more solicitude ought we to arm ourselves, and prepare for the combat with our spiritual enemies; according to the apostle's exhortation: *Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.*

Alex. You put me in mind of the subject of our last conversation. You apprehend that the practice of catholic communion is among the evils of our day. I wish to hear you more fully on this matter. That

* Due Right of Presbytery, p. 376.

we may continue our conversation without interruption, let us retire to my house which is at hand.

Rufus agreed to the proposal; and after they had gone into a room, and taken their seats, he proceeded in the following manner:

§ 8. *Ruf.* In our former conversation, we found it a great objection against making the essentials of christianity the basis or rule of sacramental communion, that they cannot be ascertained with precision on account of the intimate connection of the truths of the christian religion among themselves. But, supposing, that the essentials of the christian religion were ascertained, it would still remain to be enquired, whether the avowed and obstinate denial of the other doctrines and commands contained in the word of God, and avouched in the profession of a particular church, will not sufficiently warrant a refusal of sacramental communion with such as are chargeable with that denial. I am persuaded, that the refusal of sacramental communion by a particular church, in the supposed case, would be warrantable, on account of the inestimable value of every Divine truth.

The authority of God is the primary reason for our receiving any of the truths revealed in the word of God. This authority is stamped on them all; and is despised in rejecting the least, as well as the greatest. Hence the many charges given us in scripture to prize the truths of God, and to contend for them. Prov. xxiii. 23. *Buy the truth, and sell it not;* buy every truth, by which God makes himself known; hold it fast at every hazard. Jude, 3, where the apostle represents it as the design of his epistle to excite christians *to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;* for every article of the faith, at whatever time delivered; whether in the Old, or in the New Testament; whether in the personal ministry of Christ, or afterwards by the apostles.

Whatever tends to lessen our sense of the value and importance of God's authority, in any one of his truths, is contrary to the duty of earnestly contending for them. But when a particular church makes such a difference among the articles of Christ's truth, which are specified in her public profession, as this, that she and her members, though they refuse to communicate with the opposers of some of these articles as more essential to salvation, yet agree to communicate with the opposers of other articles as not essential. Their practice manifestly tends to lessen the sense, they ought to have, of the value and importance of Christ's authority stamped upon all his truths. They resent the injury done to Divine truth, as contrary to their own salvation; but not, as contrary to the authority and glory of God.

For a particular church, or her members, to have sacramental communion with the avowed enemies of any of the truths or institutions of Christ, as professed by her agreeably to his word, is inconsistent with one of the last charges Christ gave his ministers at his ascension, that they should *teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them*, Matth. xxviii. 20. For what are the things in which christians are to have sacramental communion? The answer is, in all the things which the apostles and other ministers ought to teach as the things of Christ: and these are not only some things, or the most important things, but all things, which he commands.

Sacramental communion necessarily includes a profession of friendship to Christ, and consequently of willingness to do whatsoever he hath commanded us, John, xv. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* There can be no communion in the sacramental supper, but so far as there is a professed agreement among the partakers, both as to what are the things which Christ hath commanded, and as to their willingness to do them.

§ 9. *Alex.* Mistakes concerning particular truths may consist with real friendship to Christ, and with the general power of truth over the heart. Nay, it is not uncommon for men's notions to be at war with their principles; their speculative principles with their practical habits. Many times a sound head is joined to a rotten heart; and a sound heart to a rotten head. Some perish, because they do not follow out their profession; and others would perish, if they did. How far erroneous conceptions may consist with a state of pardon, it would be presumptuous in us to define. This is the prerogative of him that searcheth the heart, and can weigh all its influences, interests and difficulties.*

Ruf. It is God's prerogative to judge how far mistakes concerning particular truths may consist with the general power of truth over the heart; how far men's professed principles are, as they exist in them, no practical principles at all; but merely uncertain or speculative notions; whether the rotten head be joined to a sound heart, or not; or whether the defender of a dangerous error be in a state of grace, or not: and what then?

Alex. Why, then, notwithstanding the errors and unsound principles they profess, we should hold sacramental communion with them; because their heart may be sound and under the general power of truth.

Ruf. You acknowledge this soundness of heart to be something which it does not belong to you to know. Thus, in the solemn duty of communicating, you proceed upon the supposition of something which you do not and cannot know. Is not this the height of presumption? In short, should not this consideration, that it is God's prerogative to know the heart, lead us to judge as to what churches or persons we may warrantably hold communion with in the Lord's supper, rather by considering whether their profession and practice, which we may and should know, be agreeable to the principles contained in the word of God, and publicly professed by us, than by supposing what God alone can know?

Alex. It is granted, that no christian can surrender the least tittle of that truth, which he believes to be the testimony of his God; nor do any act which implies such a surrender. Every one, in judging for himself, must make sure work by keeping on the safe side, not wilfully rejecting any truth, or adopting any error. But, in judging of others, he must go every length which the charity of the gospel dictates; i. e. every length consistent with his own attachment to and support of the truth, and which does not rank among matters of forbearance a clearly vital doctrine of christianity.†

Ruf. By a judgement of charity, you perhaps may mean, that favorable side which we ought to take, in cases wherein we have not a ground for a certain determination; because we do not and cannot

* Plea, &c. page 103, 104. † Id. page 104.

know the whole of such cases. Thus, we may charitably allow a person's gracious state, even when we see much wrong both in his profession and practice. And, with regard to particular actions, we may disapprove them, and yet charitably think the motives, by which a person was influenced in doing them, were good. But the ground to be proceeded on in sacramental communion, is of a different nature; it is always something that can be certainly known.

They, with whom the people of God were to have sacramental communion under the Old Testament, were natural descendants of Jacob, and such as professed subjection to all the ordinances which the church was bound to observe in that period; and whose known external practice was not contrary to that profession. And, under the New Testament, they, with whom christians are to hold sacramental communion, are such as openly confess Jesus of Nazareth to be the true Messiah, and to be their Prophet, Priest and King; and such as profess subjection to all his ordinances; while there is nothing known in their external practice contrary to such a profession. Such facts, being capable of being ascertained, are proper grounds on which a church may proceed in judging with whom she ought to hold sacramental communion.

§ 10. With regard to matters of forbearance, it may be observed, that they are either matters of indifference; such as, between the resurrection of Christ and the destruction of the temple, the meats and days of which the apostle speaks in the xivth chapter of the epistle to the Romans; or circumstances of time or place, such as, beginning public worship at ten or at eleven o'clock; or points which have never been stated as articles of the church's public profession or testimony: of which points the apostle speaks in Philip, iii. 15, *If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you:* These words imply, that forbearance is to be used in points, wherein some may be otherwise minded than they ought to be; while they are things, which the Lord has not yet brought a particular church to know and acknowledge; but which, she is to believe, that he will reveal to her. But no such forbearance is to be used with regard to articles of the public profession which she, as a church, has attained, according to what the apostle adds in verse 16th: *But whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* Hence, even those articles of a church's public profession, which are deemed nonessential or less important, being truths or duties of God's word which the church has been brought to know and profess, belong to the rule of her sacramental communion, and she is bound to exclude from it the open and obstinate opposers of such articles.

Here I cannot help taking notice of your comparison of the nonessential articles of our holy religion to the legs and arms of the human body. You observed, that a person may lose a limb, and yet be useful, honored, happy. So you suppose, a person may obstinately deny various truths of Christ as professed by us, and yet have sacramental communion with us. The cases, however, are not quite parallel: there is no such inconsistency in the former case, as in the latter. A man's want of a limb may be scarcely any hindrance to some ways in which he may be useful, honored, and happy. But there is no open and obstinate denial by communicants of any of the truths of Christ as pro-

fessed by us, which is not contrary to the nature of that communion, which we ought to have in partaking of the Lord's supper; as it requires an entire agreement in the public profession of the truths of Christ; as it requires our giving glory to God with one mind and one mouth. But, supposing the case of such as deny certain truths or institutions of Christ to be similar to that of persons deprived of legs or arms, still our having sacramental communion with them would be unwarrantable; as it would expose us to the danger of being reduced to the same condition; that is, we would be thereby in danger of being seduced by such communion from the profession of these truths or institutions of Christ; for, says the apostle, evil communications corrupt good manners: a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

You grant, that a christian cannot surrender the least tittle of that truth, which he believes to be the testimony of his God; nor do any act which implies such a surrender. This concession cannot be reconciled to your communicating with a church whose profession openly denies the truth, which you believe to be the testimony of your God. For the public profession, which you make in that act of communicating, can be no other, as we have seen, than the profession of the church with which you communicate: and, therefore, whatever less or greater measure of God's truth, that profession surrenders, you, in that act, surrender too. You may say, that you will retain it in your heart, and mean to resume the open profession of it, as soon as the sacramental occasion is over: so might those unfaithful professors in the first ages of the christian church, whom their heathen persecutors prevailed on to throw a handful of incense on the heathen altar, have said.

You say, that a christian cannot surrender the least tittle of truth which he believes to be the testimony of his God; or do any act which implies such a surrender. And, is it not as unlawful for a particular church, in her ecclesiastical capacity, to surrender any part of that which she hath received, and which she professes as a truth of God's word? Surely, it is no less unlawful. But a church may be justly said to surrender any such part of her profession, when she does not hold it fast. And, it is evident, that she does not hold it fast, when she admits the avowed opposers of it to her sacramental communion: for, in doing so, she in effect tells them and the world, that she does not account their opposition to that article any moral evil, nor the holding of it any duty. She does not require her members to hold it; and, therefore, she must be considered as dropping or surrendering it. For an article, which a church does not require her members to hold, may, indeed, be the private persuasion of individuals, but is no longer any part of her public profession.

§ 11. *Alex.* It is necessary to take notice of a mistake, which is growing more and more prevalent, concerning the intention and use of confessions of faith: I mean, in their present use and amplitude. When you speak of a church not surrendering any article of her profession, you mean that every article of the confession of faith which a particular church has adopted should be a term of communion; and that none should be admitted into her fellowship who disapproves of any article of it.* Is not this your opinion?

* Plea, &c. page 351.

Ruf. Yes; otherwise, I should think, it could not with propriety be called the profession of that church: because, if such as openly disapprove the various articles of it, be admitted into her communion, she may soon have few or no members that approve it: and, surely, it cannot be justly considered as the confession of any church, which is not approved by the members of it.

Alex. A confession of faith, indeed, as the fixed testimony of the church, by which her principles are to be tried, or as the judicial expression of the sense in which she understands the holy scriptures in relation to the doctrine, government, and worship of the christian church, when these things are matters of controversy, is so necessary, that it is difficult to conceive how it can be dispensed with. She must proclaim what she believes, and means to teach. But when such a confession is expanded into a comprehensive system of Theology, as in the Westminster Confession, ought it to be proposed for approbation in all its latitude to every one who desires baptism for his children, or a seat at the Lord's table? No, it is sufficient to require of such an applicant his approbation of the cardinal points. It is not necessary, that he should be required to approve the other points contained in the public confession, which may be allowed to be important and worthy to be maintained with zeal and constancy; though not essential to christian faith and fellowship.*

Ruf. I have already said, that a church, having adopted a confession of faith, has, in doing so, stated a number of truths revealed, and duties enjoined in the word of God, acknowledging her obligation to maintain them. This acknowledgement respects all the points or articles of her confession alike: so that the admission of an avowed opposer of any one of these articles, to her sacramental communion, is not only contrary to the primary obligation she is under to hold such truths and duties as contained in the word of God; but also, contrary to the secondary obligation she is under to hold them from her own acknowledgement and confession of them.

It cannot be denied, that a church's adoption of a confession of faith, necessarily implies such an obligation; for she cannot adopt any point as a truth revealed in the word of God, or as a duty enjoined therein, without acknowledging herself and all her members to be bound to continue in the faith and profession of the one, and in the practice of the other. Nor is it less evident, that her admitting to sacramental communion an avowed opposer of any of these revealed truths, or commanded duties, specified in her confession, is quite contrary to that obligation: for a church cannot be said to hold what she allows her members openly to oppose. If she grant her sacramental communion to one opposer of a truth or duty of God's word; she cannot refuse it to ten, twenty, or a hundred of the same description. We may reason in the same way concerning all those non-essential points, which you own to be important and worthy to be maintained with zeal and constancy: for if the church admits to her sacramental communion, the avowed opposer of one of these points, she cannot consistently refuse the same privilege to the pious opposer of another of them, nor to the like opposer of a third, or of a fourth, and so on, till

* Plea, &c. page 351, 352, 353, 354.

she comes to the points which you allow to be essential to the christian faith and fellowship; and then how hard it will be to retain even these essential articles, must be evident, from the acknowledged difficulty of drawing the line between them and other important points; from the close connection of one Divine truth with another, as links of the same chain; from the vanity of pretending to hold the foundation without a superstructure; and from the danger of accounting it so trivial an offence, to trample openly and obstinately upon the authority of the Supreme Lawgiver, as not to deserve the least censure of the church.

You justly allow, that, when the doctrine, the worship, or the government of the christian church is matter of controversy, a particular church ought to have a confession, expressing the sense in which she understands the scripture, in relation to the controverted subject. But, if a church admits to her sacramental communion every opposer of these articles of her confession, which are not what you call essential, though acknowledged to be important and worthy to be maintained with zeal and constancy; her confession may soon cease to be any exhibition of her sense of the controverted articles: for that confession cannot be said to be her's, of which a great part, (perhaps the far greater part) is openly and obstinately rejected by the partakers of her sacramental communion. Nay, the admission of one avowed opposer of one article of such a profession, justified and defended by her as a church, must go a great way to destroy the use of that confession, as a criterion or standard for determining her principles.

Alex. If confessions of faith were terms of sacramental communion; then they would be the shibboleths, the symbols, the flags of religious, or rather of irreligious factions; challenges to battle among believers; wedges of dissension to split the church of Christ into pieces: whereas, indeed, they ought only to proclaim, wherein believers differ from the carnal world; and to be luminous rallying points of their strength and efforts in their conflict with the enemies of our Lord and of his Christ.*

Ruf. When I spoke of confessions of faith being terms of church communion, I proceeded upon the supposition, that a confession was not an exhibition of opinions, ceremonies, and forms of church government, not to be found in the holy scriptures. I spoke of a confession which exhibits the truths and institutions of Jesus Christ, which he enjoins his whole church to receive and maintain: such a confession never was, and never can be, either the cause, or the badge of faction. When a church requires all the partakers of her sacramental communion to declare their adherence to her whole confession, it being such as is now described; then, and not otherwise, it proclaims wherein believers differ from the carnal world: for it is the character of believers, that they adhere to all the truths and institutions of Christ without any exception. It is true, the church's confession of faith may condemn errors and corruptions in which even true believers may be ensnared; but as these errors and corruptions belong to their remaining sinful conformity to the world, so that confession, in opposing them, opposes not believers themselves as such, but what belongs to the carnal world. On the other hand, if a particular church tells the world, that she holds the essential parts only of her confession as

* Plea, &c. page 348.

terms of sacramental communion, she allows her members to make little or no account of all the other parts of it. She can give no check to the open opposers of these other parts. She opens a door to endless perverse disputings against them; and also about the unanswerable question as to what is precisely the line of distinction between the essentials and the non-essentials. Thus, a particular church will be filled with schisms in the sense in which the apostle Paul uses that word, that is, for factions and parties in the same church communion; in which sense, he says, there were schisms and divisions in the Corinthian church. Thus, if a particular church has a confession of faith, and yet tells her members, that a part of it, (perhaps the far greater part) is no term of communion; the various articles of that part must be, (to use your own language) the shibboleths of religious, or rather irreligious, factions; the wedges of dissension to split such a church of Christ into pieces.

Alex. No, no; these parts of her confession, in which she allows her communicants to differ, furnishes suitable occasion for the exercise of that forbearance, which is indispensable to keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*

Ruf. It is a great sin to deny openly any truth of God, and particularly such truths as you allow to be important and worthy to be contended for with zeal and constancy: and therefore love, sincere love to our brother, who is fallen into this sin, requires us, both in our private and official capacity, to admonish and reprove him. Hence, it is evident, that a church's forbearing to reprove or censure, in such a case, those who apply for admission to her sacramental communion, is not the forbearance which the scripture inculcates, a forbearance in love. Nor can it be agreeable to the unity of the spirit for a particular church to admit to her sacramental communion, any open and obstinate opposers of what is justly stated in her confession as a truth of the Lord Jesus: for, the unity of the spirit, which is the bond of the church's peace, has the Holy Spirit for its author as a spirit of truth; and, therefore, a church's conniving at error, or her neglecting to censure the erroneous, is not to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit: led by him, the officers and members of a particular church will be valiant for the truth on the earth: their *hearts will be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding.*† How can this be the case, while they hold communion with the open and obstinate opposers of any of the truths of Christ, especially of those which being stated in their confession of faith, or their public testimony, they have bound themselves to maintain? Is not a church's retaining such opposers in her communion quite contrary to the mutual love which ought to animate her members in the joint profession of the same Divine truths? Can we sincerely embrace, in the fellowship of the gospel, those who profess their firm resolution to cut off, if they are able, our legs or arms? And are we to find no fault with this resolution; because, legs and arms not being essential, we may be useful, honored, and happy without them? Surely, if professors had as much regard for the truths of Christ, as they have for these members, they would not be so apt to relish the proposal of sacramental communion with such as openly avow their opposition to any of these truths.

* Plea, &c. page 349. † Coloss. ii. 2.

Alex. Supposing, that a particular church has adopted such a confession of faith as the Westminster Confession; it cannot be in effect a term of christian communion. Will a discreet man allow, that every plain christian, who knows enough for his salvation, and has learned to glorify God in his body and his spirit, can also be acquainted with the whole doctrine of such a standard? The most strenuous advocates for your opinion, in their examination of applicants for sacramental communion, never go into the details of these standards.*

Ruf. When a confession of faith is held by a particular church, as a term of her sacramental communion, it is not meant, that all whom she admits to that communion, are expected to have the same measure of acquaintance with that confession, and with the grounds of all its articles. There are always various degrees of knowledge among church members: in this, as in other respects, some will be farther advanced than others. This may easily be inferred from the variety of their capacities and opportunities of learning. But the confession of a particular church ought to be uniformly a term of communion in this sense, that none ought to be admitted to sealing ordinances who avow an obstinate attachment to tenets or practices inconsistent with that confession. Thus, the church may go on toward more perfection in her communion; or at least, she may retain the measure of it which she has attained. Thus, she may avoid the evil for which the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira were so severely threatened: the one for having in her communion those who held the doctrine of Balaam, and that of the Nicolaitans; and the other, for having those in it who taught their followers to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. Thus, too, the weak are encouraged to seek a more perfect knowledge of the truths exhibited in the public confession, as truths contained in the Holy Scriptures; that their communion with the church may be more perfect; they being more able to glorify God with the same mind and mouth, according to that confession.

Let us only consider what a happy change it would make in the case of the catholic visible church, if all, who were admitted to sacramental communion, would agree in an unanimous adherence to such a form of sound words as the Westminster confession of faith and catechisms; renouncing, at the same time, the errors and corruptions of some, who have professed adherence to that confession; and whose perversions of it, if admitted, would destroy the use of it, as any test of soundness in the faith.

The expectation, that the catholic church may yet come to hold as terms of communion, not only some, but all the articles of such an orthodox confession of the truth in opposition to all the various schemes of error, which have prevailed in various times and places, is not so chimerical as many suppose. There appears to be reason to believe, that it will at length be the case, from the promises that God hath given his church of the increase of light and knowledge; as when he foretells, that the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold as the light of seven days:—from his promises of the unity of the church, as when he declares, that he will give them one heart and one way; that the Lord shall be one, and his name one, through all the earth; that he will turn to the people a pure lan-

* Plea, &c. page 356.

guage, and that they shall all call on the name of the Lord, and serve him with one consent; that when the Lord shall bring again Zion, the watchmen on her walls shall see eye to eye, and with the voice together shall they sing:—from his having engaged thoroughly to plead the cause of Zion, which is the cause of truth, his own cause:—from the duty, incumbent on the church and her members, of holding fast every Divine truth, and of rejecting every contrary error:—from the close connection of all the doctrines contained in the holy scriptures, as links of the same chain, as having the same Divine authority stamped on them all, and as having the same chief end, the glory of God, and the same next subordinate end, the spiritual good of his people:—from the ability and disposition of the new nature in believers to know and acknowledge the true doctrines of the divine word, and to reject the contrary errors; for Christ's sheep know or distinguish his voice: a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers:—from the promise of the Holy Spirit to be yet more eminently poured out as a Spirit of truth:—and from the great measure of agreement in a testimony for Divine truth, which has sometimes been actually attained in the church at large, or in some parts of it.

Alex. Though I cannot grant that an approbation of all the confession of a particular church, such as the Westminster confession, ought to be required of private persons in order to their admission to baptism and the Lord's supper; yet, I allow that she ought to put this, her confession of faith, into the hands of her officers, to be by them inculcated and supported. Nothing can be more absurd than to employ, as preachers, and guardians of her religion, men, who for aught she knows, may labor to subvert the whole system, she is endeavouring to build up. She has, therefore, a right, and it is her duty, on the ground of self-preservation, as well as of fidelity to her King, to exact from them, an explicit avowal of their belief on all these topics, which more nearly or remotely affect the main interests of truth; and a positive unequivocating agreement to maintain them. For this purpose, she must bring them to a test; which can be done so effectually in no form, as that of requiring an approbation of her confession. *In* a church's confession of faith, then, are strictly and indispensably her terms of official union.*

Ruf. You then allow, that the orthodoxy of those, who are candidates for the ministry, ought to be ascertained, not by a bare acknowledgement of the scriptures, which the grossest heretic is ready to make; nor by delivering a confession of his own composing, and in the express words of scripture, which persons of erroneous principles may easily frame in such a manner as to impose upon the simple; but by declaring his approbation of a confession of faith, framed by the church, in a plain and direct opposition to the errors of the times. You grant, that we ought to be well satisfied as to the orthodoxy of these candidates, to whom we intrust the care of immortal souls. Yet, I cannot help observing, that the manner in which you express yourself, implies an opinion, that it is not properly the confession itself as a *tessera* or form of sound words, or as one whole; but rather something in it, which a candidate should be required to approve: for you speak of exacting from him, not a simple approbation of the church's

* Plea, &c. page 352, 353.

confession as one whole, but "an avowal of his belief on all these "topics which more nearly or remotely affect the main interests of "truth;" as if there were some parts of the confession which he need not be required to approve; as not much, if at all, affecting these interests: and you do not say, that a church's terms of official union are her confession, but that they are *in* it; as if they were only some part of it: so that one is still at a loss to know, how far you allow a church's confession to be a term even of official communion.

Alex. The confession of a particular church is a human thing; as such, the church cannot require a candidate to approve it indefinitely, or without exception.

Ruf. When a person approves of the confession of a particular church, he approves of it, as a subordinate standard, stating scripture truths and institutions, in direct and express opposition to prevailing errors and corruptions. It is true, there is an exception implied in the consideration of it as a standard subordinate to the holy scriptures, which constitute the supreme standard. So that a person's adherence to such a confession, cannot bind him to any thing which he may ever find in that confession inconsistent with the scripture standard. But, if a candidate for the ministry is convinced, that this is the case with any article of the confession, which he is required to approve, or to maintain, he cannot honestly comply. When a person receives the confession of a particular church, he declares, (as the members of the church of Scotland did, when they entered into the national covenant concerning their confession,) that he believes it to be "God's undoubt-"ed truth and verity, grounded only upon his written word." It is evident, that an adherence to certain things in a confession, that are connected with the *main* interests of truth, is not an honest adherence to the confession itself. And, if an approbation of these things, while they are not specified, be all that a candidate means by his approbation of a confession, it is not too much to say, that he deals deceitfully with God and man.

It is vain to say, that the confession of a particular church is a human thing: for, candidly interpreted, it may be found to contain nothing but the undoubted truths of God's word. It is either possible for men to express these truths in their own words, or it is not. If it is not possible, then his words cannot be understood: and all attempts to state, explain, illustrate or apply them, as in public preaching or in writing, are vain; a supposition grossly absurd. But if it be possible for men to express the truths of the scripture in their own words; then the doctrines or instructions contained in a confession, may be no other than the truths of God's word: and, if they are actually no other, then a church may warrantably require of her members, and of such as desire admission to her communion, a public assent to her whole confesssion, nor can that assent be refused without impiety. No church has a right to require her members to receive any of the doctrines or commandments of men; but her Divine Head authorises her to exact of her members an adherence to all his truths and institutions. In this case, he is saying, *He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.*

Alex. You think, that the members in general, of any particular church, should be required to acknowledge her whole confession of

faith. But a church seems to do enough for securing soundness of doctrine in her communion, when she requires this acknowledgment from ministers, without asking it from her other members.

Ruf. A person, who openly and obstinately refuses to assent to any article of a church's confession, containing nothing but what is to be found in the word of God, is chargeable with obstinacy in error, and opposition to one or more of the truths of God: and though this obstinacy is more aggravated in ministers; yet there is no good reason to warrant a church's conniving at, or letting it pass without censure, in other church members. Many of the reasons that require ministers to acknowledge the church's confession, render it necessary for other church members to do so. Ought ministers to agree to the same confession of faith, that the church may with one mind and one mouth glorify God? Such agreement is no less requisite for the same end in other members, who constitute the body of the church. It is as necessary for the people in general, as for the ministers, that they be agreed, in order to their walking comfortably in the fellowship of the gospel. Again, are ministers required to agree to the church's confession, because they are public teachers? and should not the other members give the like evidence of their soundness in the faith; since they also are called to teach their families and others privately? In this respect, all the Lord's people are prophets. It seems scarcely more necessary, that the public teaching of ministers should be agreeable to the church's confession, than that the private teaching of other members should be so. Is the approbation of a church's confession necessary to guard against the danger of an erroneous ministry? and is not the danger of receiving into, or retaining in the communion of any particular church, multitudes of private persons, who may be attached to error, and zealous to propagate it, equally great? and is not the church's requiring an approbation of her confession, a proper mean to be used against the latter, as well as against the former of these dangers?

In a word, though the qualifications requisite in order to ministerial communion be different from those necessary to the communion of private christians, yet there ought to be no difference between ministers and other members of the church in respect of the faith, or in respect of the confession of it; and a departure from any article of the true faith, ought to be censured, not only in ministers, but also in other members.

§ 12. If our time were not gone, I would urge, as an argument against the scheme of catholic communion, that it is inconsistent with the faithful exercise of that holy discipline which Christ appointed to be maintained in his church. This is implied in what has been already offered. But the importance of it deserves a distinct consideration.

Alex. I would be glad to hear your observations on this topic before you go. I shall mention any exceptions to your reasoning, that may occur.

Ruf. The neglect of this discipline is highly displeasing to the Lord Christ. He severely threatened the church of Pergamos, for having in her communion, some that held the doctrine of Balaam, and others that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; and also the church of Thyatira, for suffering that woman Jezebel to teach and seduce his ser-

vants. Though the error that is held by persons, refusing their consent to the confession of a particular church, may not be so gross as the errors of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, or those taught by Jezebel; yet, as according to the confession of that church, they are real errors, they really contradict the doctrine of Christ; and, therefore, are things that he hates: so that if the open and avowed maintainers of them be not censured, but received into or retained in the communion of the church, that communion is thereby corrupted: and any church, which is chargeable with such corruption, ought to consider the reproofs and threatenings denounced against these churches as applicable to herself.

The practice of this discipline is enjoined, when the church is directed to purge out the old leaven; and to mark and avoid those who hold doctrine contrary to what she has received as the doctrine of Christ, 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.* The apostle is here speaking of sacramental communion; and shews, not only that every church member should, in the exercise of faith and repentance, purge out his personal impurities; but that the church ought to separate from her communion, such as, upon enquiry, she finds to be leaven, or persons incorrigibly attached to some error or sinful practice. Rom. xvi. 17. *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have received; and avoid them.* 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.* According to these texts, it is the indispensable duty of a church, that has adopted a confession, stating no other doctrines than such as are contained in the holy scriptures, to hold the avowed and obstinate opposers of any article of that confession, to be chargeable with causing divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which she has received. This must be more especially the case, when a separate society is erected and kept up on purpose to oppose any such article of Christ's truth. Farther, if all the articles of a church's confession be according to the tradition of the apostles recorded in scripture; then, it must be good order to acknowledge them all; and it must be disorderly to reject any of them. Those who persist openly and obstinately in opposing the doctrine that we have received as the doctrine of Christ, and in thus causing divisions and offences, are to be marked and avoided. But surely we cannot be said, in the sense of these texts, to avoid them, or withdraw from them, while we admit them to all the intimacy of sacramental communion.

Alex. With regard to the text in 2 Thess. iii. 6. Paul explains his meaning, verse 11. *For we hear*, says he, *that there are some who walk disorderly among you, working not at all, but are busy-bodies:* adding, verse 12. *Now them that are such we command, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.* And, by way of stimulating them to honest industry, he reminds the Thessalonians of an order he had passed, when he was with them: viz. That no lazy professor of religion, should receive any support from the public charity; which is the import of the command,

That if any would not work, neither should he eat. From such disorderly persons, the Thessalonians were charged to withdraw; and the duty of christians, in similar cases, is still the same.*

Ruf. I grant all this; but what then? Because the apostle here speaks of one instance of walking disorderly, does it follow that there are no other instances of such walking? or that other instances of it, do not equally warrant the withdrawing which the apostle enjoins? Surely, the obstinate rejection of an article of a church's confession, which is agreeable to the tradition received from the apostles by the holy scriptures, must warrant the censure here meant by *withdrawing*, no less than the indolent neglect of the business of a worldly calling.

Alex. But, Rufus, this text is nothing to your purpose; as it seems clear, that it is not a charge to withhold church communion.

Ruf. How does it seem so clear?

Alex. For four reasons: 1st, The terms are entirely different from those which the scripture elsewhere uses, in regard to church fellowship. 2ndly, A church, in her collective capacity, does not withdraw herself from an offender. She authoritatively puts him away from her communion. 3dly, The withdrawing here enjoined was to be a means of bringing the disorderly brother to a sense of his misbehaviour, and a compliance with the apostle's mandate for abandoning his idle and impertinent habits: in case of disobedience, he was to be reported to the apostle for ulterior judgement; and, in the mean time, his brethren were to have no company with him, verse 14. Therefore, he was still in communion. 4thly, Even after this withdrawing, this reporting, this having no company with him, he was not to be accounted as an enemy, but admonished as a brother.

The alternative is, that Paul speaks of private familiar intercourse. His terms apply to this exactly.

The only other place in which the word rendered *have company*, occurs in the New Testament, is in 1 Cor. v. 9, 11. where it is also used in the sense now mentioned. If the offender resisted these milder proceedings, they were to decline his company altogether; but to leave with his conscience, a friendly and faithful admonition of his sin, of his disgrace, and of his peril.†

Ruf. With regard to your first and second reason, it may be observed, that when I quoted this text, I did not mean that the apostle is here formally directing the office-bearers in the church, how to inflict censure on those that walk disorderly; but that, in this solemn charge, he declared persons of such a description to be proper objects of censure; and warned the Thessalonians (speaking to them in general, and not exclusively to the office-bearers,) to have neither sacramental communion, nor unnecessary private intercourse with them, while they persisted in their offensive conduct. Declining public sacramental communion, however, with such open offenders, was not less, but more necessary as a means of making them ashamed, than the declining of private intercourse with them. The Greek word rendered *have company* signifies familiar, friendly, brotherly intercourse; which might be in religious as well as in civil society; and from which we cannot reasonably suppose, that the apostle would have directed the Thessa-

* Plea, &c. pages 336, 337. † Id. pages 337, 338.

lonians to exclude any, with whom they had, at the same time, regular sacramental communion. The expression, *note such a person*, represents him as an object of church censure; as bearing a public mark, serving to distinguish him from those that were in the full enjoyment of the privileges of the visible church. As to your assertion, that the offending brother was to be referred to the apostle for ulterior judgement, I can see no ground for it in the text. On the contrary, the judgement here delivered, is decisive and final. You allow, that when the apostle wrote this epistle, the offender was still in communion. This may be justly inferred from his being called *a brother*, and from the direction to withdraw from him, and to note him; but not from the Greek word in the sense to which it is limited in your criticism: for, supposing him to have been secluded from sacramental communion, such a direction with regard to the private carriage of the Thessalonians towards him would have been proper. Accordingly, *their having no company* with him is mentioned as what was to be the manner of their behaviour towards him in consequence of their having noted him by some censure of the church. Indeed, supposing him to have persisted in his offensive conduct, and the office-bearers and other members of the Thessalonian church to have obeyed the apostle's command, to withdraw from him, and to have no company with him; it is not conceivable, that they could, at the same time, continue to have sacramental communion with him. The apostle's directing the Thessalonians not to account him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother, does not prove that he was not to be laid under the censure of the church. There are various degrees of church censure. Admonition, rebuke, suspension from sealing ordinances, are salutary and medicinal. When a person becomes the object of such censures, though he may be considered in spiritual danger and infirmity, yet he is not to be counted as an enemy, but as a brother. It seems plain, therefore, that the person here described, was an object of church censure; and one who, while he continued such, was not to be admitted to sacramental communion.

It may be added, that one of the instructions which this passage affords us is, that our withdrawing from persons or churches, on account of their obstinacy in opposing some truth or duty of God's word, is consistent with our owning them as brethren in the Lord: for though the Thessalonians were to note a church member as walking disorderly, and to have no company with him; yet, they were still to regard him as a brother.

Alex. The apostle, however, does not mean, that we are to hold no sacramental communion with churches or their members, that have defects or blemishes. Did he say to the christians of his time, the churches of Corinth, of Rome, of Galatia, are disorderly, and you must have no communion with them, or with their members? no such thing.*

Ruf. They, who, on presbyterian principles, oppose what you term catholic communion, are far from saying, that we are to hold no communion with churches or their members that have blemishes. It is unfair, as was formerly observed, to impute to them the opinion of the Brownists. This charge is just as groundless as that, which the Papists

* Plea, &c. page 340.

bring against the Protestants, of the same sort of schism with that of the ancient Donatists. I am far from charging the various religious societies, whose sacramental communion, I think, we ought to decline, with as great corruption as that of the Popish church; but the principle, on which we ought to decline sacramental communion with them, is the same: namely, That it is an unlawful communion, in which we cannot consistently make a faithful profession of Divine truth; nor exhibit a judicial testimony for it, according to that conformity to the word of God, which we, on sufficient grounds, believe his church has attained. On this principle, it is evident, that it is not the occurrence of defects or blemishes, with which a church may be chargeable; it is not even the errors and corruptions of individuals or of factions in a church, that are the bars to our sacramental communion with her; but such errors and corruptions, such backsliding courses as she, in her collective or representative capacity, avows, justifies, and holds fast as a part of her profession; disregarding any judicial testimony that has been given against such evils.

Whatever faults or disorders the apostle Paul reproved in the christians at Corinth, at Rome, or in Galatia; we have no account, that, after his reproofs and injunctions, the churches in these places persisted obstinately in the evils reproved; or, that the apostle, while they, in their united capacity, avowed their rejection of any one of the doctrines or commands of Christ delivered by him, allowed himself or others to have sacramental communion with them. How the apostle would have acted in such a case, seems to be sufficiently determined by the passage we have just now been considering: *If any man*, says he, *obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.* By a parity of reason, would not the apostle have said: If any particular church obey not our word, or, in her ecclesiastical capacity, refuse to receive any doctrine or command delivered by us in writing, under the infallible direction of the Holy Spirit; note that church, and have no communion with her or her members, that they may be ashamed of their error or disorder?

Alex. It is a mistake to think, that a particular church has no right to censure disorderly members of other churches, who apply to her for sacramental communion. The catholic church has the right of restraining a disorderly member by the agency of any one particular church, in which he may have enjoyed her communion. Any individual, wearing and disgracing the christian name, provided his church membership be ascertained, may, according to the statutes of the Redeemer's kingdom, be called to account, reproved, excommunicated, by any christian church, on the spot where he happens to be, even without an act of formal communion there; much more then, after that act.*

Ruf. I cordially agree to this observation: I think it most useful and important. But it appears to be contrary to your scheme of catholic communion. For, in the first place, the right of restraining a disorderly member, which you ascribe to the catholic church, is just what I have been contending for, as the right of every particular church; the right of refusing to admit to her sacramental communion, the

* Plea, &c. pages 363, 364.

avowed and obstinate opposers of any article of her scriptural profession: whereas, according to your catholic scheme, she has no right to refuse it to such opposers, unless the article opposed be what you deem essential. But such refusal is certainly a right of the catholic church; for the catholic church requires all attainable conformity to the word of God, in all particular churches, and in all their members. She cannot, consistently, spare or tolerate one error or corruption in doctrine, worship, discipline or government. The errors and corruptions that prevail in particular churches, are not to be ascribed to the catholic church as delineated in the scriptures. When I say this of the catholic church, as the body of Christ, I speak of what she ought to be, not of what she is, in the present degenerate state of many particular churches. I speak of her in the same sense in which, I think, you must be understood, when you say, she has the right of restraining disorderly members by the agency of any one particular church; that is, as she is morally incapable of sanctioning or countenancing any disorder, any real error or corruption.

In the second place, I observe, that the exercise of discipline in any particular church, with regard to the members of other churches, must either have, or not have, the peculiar corruptions retained and justified by these churches for its object. If the exercise of discipline you propose, has no respect to these peculiar corruptions, but only to other vices and immoralities, then, it is nothing to the purpose of answering this objection against your scheme of catholic communion: (I mean this objection, that it renders church discipline partial and unfaithful;) while these peculiar corruptions, which are supposed to be as really contrary to the word of God, and to the public profession of the particular church in which this communion takes place, as any other evils, are spared and tolerated. But if the discipline proposed with regard to the members of other churches, respects these peculiar corruptions; even corruptions, which, though they may not be deemed to be in essentials, are really contrary to the word of God, and to the public profession of such a particular church; then, it must be a discipline that subjects the members of these churches to censure, for their peculiar corruptions; and, if they are obstinate, to exclusion from sacramental communion. If Prelacy, for example, be the peculiar corruption in which a person is involved, by being a member of a corrupt church; then, according to this discipline, a particular church, which is faithful, can have no sacramental communion with him, while he avows an obstinate attachment to that corruption; or, till he acknowledges it to be sinful, and a cause of God's displeasure with his church. If a particular church were to exercise discipline faithfully on the members of other churches, from whose communion she has, upon scriptural principles, withdrawn, and continues separate, she would, in the first place, censure them for continuing in the communion of these corrupt churches. How can we censure our own members for opposing any article of our confession or testimony agreeable to the scriptures; and yet exempt from censure the members of other churches, chargeable with the same offence; merely, because it is an offence practised and justified by these churches? Surely a real offence, condemned by the word of God, is not obliterated nor even extenuated by the multitudes, under the name of churches, that are

involved in it. We are expressly forbidden to follow a multitude to do any evil.

Alex. Here is the mischief: every one accounts that to be order, which he has been accustomed to practise; and whosoever does not move in his track, walks disorderly.*

Ruf. It is a great mischief, in dealing with the erroneous, that they never adhere to the true state of the question. By this means, the clearest evidence of what is offered for their conviction, is eluded. At present, the subject of discussion is not, how far any are right or wrong in charging others with actual disorder; but the abstract question, Whether we ought to have sacramental communion with such as publicly profess their purpose of adhering to what the scripture teaches us, and our own profession justly binds us to consider as real disorder.

I only add at present, that I am persuaded, that the apostle Paul would have pronounced any person a disorderly walker, who is an open and obstinate rejecter of any one of the doctrines or commands of Christ; and that he would not have reckoned the offence less, but greater, for this circumstance, that the doctrine or command rejected, is an express article of the confession of a particular church: for it was Paul's manner to assert the truth in the most faithful and pointed manner against the errors that began, very early, to trouble the New Testament church. It seems to have been a less evil, than that now specified, for which he withstood Peter to the face, as not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel.

Our time will not permit us to pursue the subject any farther at present.

Alex. If you please, Rufus, we may resume our conversation tomorrow, after breakfast.

Ruf. I have no objection to your proposal.

DIALOGUE III.

The character of a church with which we are to have sacramental communion.....The import of *Calling on the name of the Lord Jesus*.....Sacramental communion with what may, in some sense, be termed a true church of Christ, not always our duty.....Sacramental communion with those with whom Christ has communion, in some cases, not warrantable.....Nor, in some cases, with those that belong to the catholic church.....Nor always with a particular church, on account of its duty to dispense the Lord's supper..... The christian character which entitles to sacramental communion.

§ 13. *Ruf.* So we have met according to our agreement; let us proceed in the consideration of the question concerning what is termed *catholic communion.*

Alex. The question concerning a church, in order to our communion with her, ought to be, What is her substantial character? Has she the truth, the ordinances, the Spirit of Christ?†

* Plea, &c. page 342. † Id. page 342.

Ruf. The expression, *substantial character*, seems to be one of those well-sounding phrases, which we are apt to use in common conversation, without knowing precisely what we mean by them. But, with regard to the truths and ordinances of Christ, I should think, a christian ought to try a church, as he tries his own heart, by the universality of her regard to them. A church, as well as a believer, may justly say, *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments.* A church may hold some truths and ordinances of Christ; and yet, while she refuses to maintain others in their purity, particularly such as are much opposed in the day wherein we live, she may be chargeable with great unfaithfulness to the Lord Christ. And how are we to know whether a church has the Spirit of Christ, but by the impartiality of her regard to all his truths and institutions! This is intimated in the universal terms that are used with regard to the things, which the Holy Spirit teaches believers. *The Spirit of truth shall guide you into all the truth. We have an unction from the Holy One, whereby we know all things.*

Alex. Will you say, that we ought never to communicate, but with the members of a perfect church.*

Ruf. By no means; but it should be our concern, that the church with which we communicate be faithful. There are three things necessary to entitle a church to that character; each of which is subverted by the latitudinarian scheme of church communion.

The first of these things is constancy, in adhereing to whatever degree of reformation has been attained. The Lord's kindness, in bringing a professing people to a purer profession of the truth, and to a purer observation of her ordinances, than many others which bear the christian name, ought to be acknowledged with lively gratitude, as laying them under a special obligation to persevere in their adherence to the whole of that profession, and not to lose any thing which he has wrought for them. Hence our Lord gives that solemn charge to the churches of Asia again and again, *Hold fast that which thou hast*, Rev. ii. 25. iii. 11. And it is always the duty of the church, to attend to what she has attained, and to walk according to that rule, Philip, iii. 16. We are enjoined *to hold fast the profession of the faith without wavering*, Heb. x. 23: without doubting, without departing from the least iota of it; or even from the scriptural mode of professing the faith that has been attained. But a church, as we have already seen, is receding from the scriptural profession which she has attained, when she has sacramental communion with the avowed opposers of any article of that profession. A church, that has made a good profession of the doctrines of grace, falls away from it, when she holds sacramental communion with Socinians and Arminians: A church, that has made a public profession of her faith concerning Presbyterial church government, as the only government which Christ has appointed to be exercised in his church, falls away from that profession, when she holds sacramental communion with Episcopalians or Independents. In like manner, a church that has exhibited a judicial testimony against the prevailing errors and corruptions of the times, falls away from that testimony, when she holds communion with the known opposers of it.

* Plea, &c. page 322.

Another thing, which belongs to the character of a faithful church, is the bold and open profession of controverted truths. We read of *the present truth* which christians ought to know and be established in, 2 Pet. i. 12: and of *the word of Christ's patience*, which some are commended for keeping, Rev. iii. 10: by which we may understand any article of the christian religion, which is much despised and reproached; which christians, on that account, are tempted to relinquish; and the faithful holding of which is continually an exercise of their faith and patience. The present truth, or word of Christ's patience, is often varying: it is sometimes one truth or duty, sometimes another. In itself, or comparatively considered, it may be something less important. In the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, it was the duty of observing the ceremonial prohibition of the eating of swine's flesh. It has been the scriptural form of church government, or of religious worship, as well as the Divinity of Christ, or justification through his imputed righteousness. But the truth or duty, in this case, derives a temporary importance from the present opposition made to it; and from the trial which is thereby taken of the faithfulness of professors. A church and her members are unfaithful, when they decline the open and particular profession of any one such controverted article of the christian religion: nor will their profession of all the other articles of that religion excuse or exempt them from the charge of unfaithfulness, while they obstinately refuse to acknowledge that which is controverted. By such an article, God takes trial of churches, as he took trial of Saul, by the command to destroy the Amalekites; of the remnant of the Jews that came to Jeremiah to enquire the word of the Lord, by the prohibition of going to Egypt; and of the young man enquiring what he should do to inherit eternal life, by the duty of parting with his large possessions at Christ's call. All this doctrine is exploded by the latitudinarian scheme of church communion: according to which, a particular church, instead of contending for the present truth, or the truth that is controverted, must admit to her communion the most obstinate and avowed opposers of that truth; nor can she consistently inflict the slightest censure, not even an admonition, for the most open contempt of it. Nay, she must allow her members to have sacramental communion with a church whose public profession is in direct opposition to such a truth, and to declare their agreement with that very profession in the act of communicating with her.

The third thing, belonging to the character of a faithful church, is, that she is sincerely endeavouring to come nearer to perfection in respect of her communion. *Let us go on*, says the apostle, *to perfection*.* It is true, there is no perfect church upon earth, as there is no perfect saint. Yet, as every true believer is aiming at perfection in holiness; so a church, as far as she is faithful, aims at perfection in her communion. There are two things necessary to this perfection. One is, the integrity of her profession, as including an adherence to all the doctrines and commandments of Christ. The other is, the harmony of her members being such, that they all think and speak the same thing. It is evident, that a church is not aiming at this perfection, whose allowed practice it is, to admit to her sacramental communion, the avowed opposers of any doctrine, which she acknowledges as taught

* Heb. vi. 1.

in the word of God; or of any form of worship or church government, which she holds to have been instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. A church, that is going on towards perfection, instead of seeking communion with the open opposers of her confession, will study to be more exact in receiving none to her communion, but such as adhere to every article of it; and, instead of rendering the articles of her confession fewer or more ambiguous, she will endeavour to have the truths of God and the duties enjoined in his word, exhibited in her confession or testimony more largely and particularly, according to the prevalence of contrary errors and corruptions. It is this endeavour, that distinguishes a faithful reforming, from a declining and backsliding, church.

Alex. I will not quarrel with a church about forms, about ceremonies, about any of these points, in which our disagreement does not prevent us from being one in the Lord Jesus Christ. For the sake of that transcendant common interest, I will walk with her in love and fellowship. The question is not about substance, but about accident; not about those vital principles and virtues which constitute the solid glory of a church, and are the seal of God's own Spirit, but about imperfections, which neither destroy their being, nor hinder their predominance; and especially about those things in which she differs from our own peculiarities. Here is the huge stumbling-block—the inexpiable transgression.*

Ruf. You rightly call us, Alexander, to attend to the state of the question. If it were enquired, whether any church might warrantably censure, or exclude persons from sacramental communion on account of their refusing an approbation of the doctrines and commandments of men, or of the forms and ceremonies which men have introduced into the worship of God, I would readily answer in the negative. But it is plain, that the question about catholic or latitudinarian communion is, Whether a church ought to admit to her sacramental communion such as obstinately reject any article of her confession containing nothing but some truth revealed or duty enjoined in the word of God. I see not how such rejection of the truth can be denied to be sin; or how the office-bearers of the church, when it comes regularly before them, (as it must do when they are judging who are to be admitted to sacramental fellowship,) can let it pass without censure. *Them that sin*, these office-bearers are bound to *rebuke before all.* And if the offenders are obstinate, and cannot be brought to an acknowledgment of the truth, higher censure becomes necessary. Such is the order, according to which the word of God directs his church to deal with persons chargeable with error either in judgement or practice. The office-bearers of the church may have a judgement of charity concerning some that have fallen into grievous error; that as to their state they are still one with them in the Lord Jesus Christ. But what then? May the office-bearers, on that account, dispense with the order that Christ hath appointed? May they admit such offenders to sacramental communion, without requiring them to submit to any censure on account of their error? Or, if these offenders obstinately refuse to submit, and persist in their error, must the office-bearers, disregarding the order of Christ's house, admit them to his table, notwithstanding their obstinacy? By no means: Their doing so would be both dishonoring

* Plea, &c. pages 342, 343.

to the Lord Christ, who appointed that order, and injurious to the souls of the offenders themselves, for whose good it was appointed: and the Lord's people would have cause to fear that he would make a breach upon them, because they sought him not after the due order.

I may farther observe, that an article of a church's confession, which is really a portion of the christian religion, and acknowledged to be so, ought not to be called an accident; since it is necessary to the perfection of the christian religion, and was designed by infinite wisdom to be so. Nor ought it to be represented as a peculiarity of that church, since it ought to be held by the whole catholic church: nor ought the evil of denying it to be minced and palliated, by giving it the name of a trivial imperfection; since it belongs to that unbelief which makes God a liar. Such an article of a church's confession is indeed a stumbling-block, in the sense in which Christ himself is so to many. I am persuaded, that the rejection of the least of all the truths or institutions of the Lord Jesus is such a transgression, as cannot be expiated otherwise than by his infinitely precious blood.

§ 14. *Alex.* The word of God extends the privilege of whatever communion the church enjoys, to all them who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Calling upon the name of the Lord Jusus, is not a loose nor equivocal phrase. It is a comprehensive, yet precise and well defined character of a real and orderly christian. Its terms must be interpreted by those fuller declarations of the scripture to which it refers, and of which it is a summary. Thus, the name of Jesus includes whatever is peculiar to him, as the Saviour of sinners: for example, the doctrine of his person; of his righteousness; of his sacrifice; of his intercession; of his authority; briefly, of his fulness, as the fountain of all that grace, which his redeemed receive now; and of all that glory, which they shall enjoy hereafter. Calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus is equivalent to such a profession of faith in him as contains the embracing him, in his saving offices, bearing testimony to his cause and cross, waiting upon him in his ordinances, addressing him in acts of direct worship, submitting to his authority, and keeping his commandments. *Let every one*, says Paul, *who names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.* This is our great practical test. They who are without the doctrine of Christ, must not indeed presume to talk of their virtues. But, on the other hand, they who do not glorify him as made of God unto them sanctification, crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, and studying to be holy in all manner of conversation, can derive no true comfort from their doctrinal accuracy; nor be allowed to plead it as a valid title to sacramental fellowship. Faith, without works, is dead in the judgement of God and man.*

Ruf. The view you have given of the character of those who call on the Lord Jesus, I believe to be just. Allowing, then, that this character, according to your view of it, should regulate the church's admission of persons to sacramental communion, it will follow, that any open deviation from this character, must expose a church member to censure, and, while he obstinately persists in it, to suspension from the Lord's table. They are, however, chargeable with such deviation from this character, who refuse to bear testimony to the cause of

* Plea, &c. pages 319, 320.

Christ, to his whole cause. But it cannot be denied, that every article of a church's confession, expressing adherence to any of the truths or institutions of Jesus Christ, belongs to his cause: and, therefore, the open rejection of such an article, must be an open refusal to bear testimony to some part of the cause of Christ; and, consequently, is an open deviation from the character you have described of those who call on the Lord Jesus; a deviation, which obstinately persisted in, renders the censure and suspension, now mentioned, necessary.

Alex. It is indeed the character of those who call on the name of the Lord Jusus, that they are such as cherish the faith of the cardinal truths, and bear testimony against errors affecting the substance of the gospel. Such, I think, no church should exclude from sacramental communion; though they refuse to acknowledge a non-essential article of the church's confession; however consonant that article may be to the scriptures. I suppose you cannot deny that this may be the case with persons or churches that may be justly said to call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

Ruf. If this character of calling on the name of the Lord Jesus be admitted as a rule of sacramental communion, it must be either according to the whole extent of its import, or according to a certain part of it. If this character be a rule of communion only according to a part of its import, so that there are some things belonging to it which need not be required in order to the admission of persons to sacramental communion, and which they may openly and obstinately reject, without being liable to any church censure; then it should be shewn, from the scriptures, what these things are. This has never been, and never will be shewn. On the other hand, if this character be a rule of church communion according to its whole import, then every open deviation from it, that comes under the cognizance of the office-bearers of the church, ought to render persons liable to censure, and, if they are obstinate, to exclusion from sacramental communion.

When we say, that those to whom church communion is to be extended, are such as call on the name of the Lord Jesus, or christians; we do not mean that all, who bear such a designation are to be admitted to sacramental communion indiscriminately, and without any enquiry, whether they are submitting to the due order which Christ hath appointed his people to observe, in approaching to his table. A person, who is, in general and according to a judgement of charity, entitled to the character of one that calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, may fail in some particular, belonging to the whole extent of that character, as you have explained it, as for example, in that of assenting to a particular article of a church's confession; which, though it may not be one of the more important articles, is certainly consonant to the word of God. When this is the case, the due order, according to which a person should approach to the Lord's table, requires that he should be one who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, not only in general, but also in that particular: for he ought not to be admitted to sacramental communion, under the character of one, who obstinately persists in any one thing, which, according to the church's confession, is a deviation from what you have shewn to be included in the import of calling on the Lord Jesus.

The truth is, your account of calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, as the character of those with whom a church ought to have sacramental communion, is plainly inconsistent with the opinion, that a church ought to require no other profession of the christian religion in order to that communion, than a profession of the cardinal truths, or of such as affect the substance of the gospel. For this opinion supposes, that there are some other truths of the gospel, which, though acknowledged to be such in the public profession of a particular church, yet not being cardinal truths, nor belonging to the substance of the gospel, are smaller truths, the open denial of which ought not to be a ground of church censure, or of exclusion from the Lord's table. These truths are said to be smaller matters; and they may be so in a comparative sense. But, absolutely considered, we may well say with Mr. Livingston, "Christ's small things are great things." You have granted, that a christian is bound to hold the least tittle of what he acknowledges to be Divine truth: and how can you refuse to allow the church, in her collective and judicial capacity, to be under the same obligation?

§ 15. *Alex.* What a spectacle in the eyes of God, of angels, and of men, is a number of churches, all wearing the same name, pleading the authority and professing substantially the faith of their Redeemer, pretending to cherish his Spirit, to imitate his example, and to promote his kingdom; and yet, refusing to hold communion with each other, on account of their respective corruptions.*

Ruf. If any of these churches are persisting in real corruptions, or in the profession or practice of any thing really contrary to the word of God, it is plain, that, in that particular, they cannot lawfully plead the authority of Christ; nor justly contend that, in that respect, they are cherishing his Spirit, imitating his example, or promoting his kingdom. So far as they are obstinately attached to their idol, they are holding fast deceit, and refusing to let it go. On the other hand, if the supposition of corruptions in these churches has no foundation but in misunderstanding or calumny; then, three things must follow. *First*, That it ought to be shewn, that this is the true state of the case; and that what was called a corruption of any of these churches, was either falsely imputed to her, or was in truth no corruption, but a truth revealed or a duty enjoined by the word of God. *Secondly*, That, in order to sacramental communion, these churches ought to acknowledge the unjust charges they have brought against one another. These churches have offended one another: in which case, reconciliation ought to go before sacramental communion; and there is no cordial reconciliation without a candid acknowledgment of the offence that has taken place: which acknowledgment ought to be as public and explicit as the offence. *Thirdly*, These churches ought to exist no longer, as societies separate from one another, in respect of religious persuasion or communion.

Alex. There are opinions, feelings, habits, which must be reduced much nearer than they are to some common standard, before it could be attempted to bring them into one organized body, without the danger of doing more harm than good.†

* Plea, &c. page 322. † Id. page 362.

Ruf. There is not a more solemn exhortation in the book of God, than that which we have in 1 Cor. i. 10, *Now I beseech you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing; and that there be no divisions among you: no divisions* for the maintaining of what is contrary to truth or duty: no divisions on account of indifferent things; on account of opinions, feelings, or habits, which are not sufficient grounds of church censure.

According to the Presbyterian, the only scriptural system of church government, the catholic church ought to be all comprehended in one organized body, having many organized bodies subordinate to it; but all of them professing the same faith, and subject to the same discipline. While the catholic church is not thus one, it is so far in a state of defection from the Divine rule of its constitution. All the parts of the catholic church ought to have sacramental communion with one another. But then this supposes, not only their agreement in the doctrine and in the means and manner of Divine worship, but also their subjection to the same discipline and government.

Alex. Though the churches, which I just now described, have each a distinct ordinary and stated communion of its own, this is no reason against the cultivation of friendly intercourse—against what may be called church hospitality—against the most ungrudging fellowship in holy ordinances, as opportunity serves. They, who should live very uncomfortably under the same roof, may yet be excellent neighbours.*

Ruf. Were a person to come into his neighbour's house, and by collusion with some unfaithful servants, partake of the provisions and other privileges of the family, when and how he pleased, in contempt of the family order; can we suppose that it would satisfy the head of the family, to be told that nothing was meant but friendly intercourse and hospitality; that the person did not seek to dwell under the same roof, but would be an excellent neighbour. Would not the master of the house resent such injurious conduct; and forbid such a person to enter his house, unless he would comply with the order and regulations of the family? It is much in the same manner that a person treats a particular church, when he avows his contempt of some part of her scriptural profession, or of her scriptural discipline; and yet, through the unfaithfulness of her office-bearers, is admitted to her sacramental communion.

Alex. Are not all the churches, I alluded to, true churches of Jesus Christ

Ruf. It is necessary to distinguish between a true church and a pure church. A church, that has all these things necessary to the being of a church, and that makes an external visible profession of such doctrines as are absolutely necessary to be known and believed in order to salvation, is a true church. By a pure church is meant, not a perfect church, but one that through the goodness and mercy of God, has attained a great measure of conformity to the Divine pattern, in her doctrine, worship, government and discipline; and, in these respects, is free from those errors and corruptions which render other churches impure. A true church, is one that adheres to Jesus Christ as her foundation: but even such a church may build so much hay and stubble upon the foundation; and may become so impure and corrupt in

* Plea, &c. page 362.

doctrine, worship, and government, that it may be warrantable and necessary to withdraw from her communion.

The church of England holds the truth in her doctrinal articles; yet, her corruptions in worship, discipline, and government, and her refusing to give any faithful testimony against the many gross errors which have been taught by her members, and which are directly contrary to her own articles, sufficiently warrant the secession of the dissenters in England and Ireland from her communion. So the churches, you allude to, may be true churches of Christ; and yet, in some of them, obstinate attachment to error, and continued defection from the reformation formerly attained, may render a separate communion necessary for the due maintainance of a testimony for truth.

These churches are, in fact, separated from one another: and any one of them, on whose part the separation is just and necessary, cannot, consistently with faithfulness, return to sacramental communion with them, whose defections caused the separation, till they return to an acknowledgment of the truth.

§ 16. *Alex.* It cannot be denied, that God holds communion with these churches; and therefore, we may hold sacramental communion with them.

Ruf. The consequence may be justly denied, for the reason given by a judicious writer. Our Presbyterian or reformed divines, says he, are all very cautious in determining what length a church may go in defection or corruption, before communion is wholly cut off between the Head and all the members thereof. Though corruption and superstition can never have the approbation and countenance of Heaven; will it therefore follow, that when we depart from communion with a particular visible church, on account of her corruptions. Christ, the Head of the church, is to be blamed, if he, in his adorable sovereignty, communicate his grace even to those who remain in communion with that church, however corrupt and degenerate? The sovereignty of grace may be glorified amongst those, with whom it is not safe nor warrantable for us to hold communion, as members of the same ecclesiastical body. The hidden and secret communications of the grace of the Redeemer, are not the standard or rule of our duty.*

Alex. Your author is chargeable with confusion; for he does not distinguish between secret and public communion. No intelligent christian will admit, that things, which are absolutely secret between God and the soul, can be a rule of proceeding to his church. But the visible and public communion, which God holds with a church, or with her members, is such a rule.†

Ruf. You agree with the author, then, that the secret communications of the Redeemer's grace, are not the rule of our duty in the matter of church communion. The communion of God with his own people, is in the nature of it secret; as it consists in the communications of his saving grace to them, and the returns of their faith and love to him. Every person in a state of grace, in some measure, enjoys this communion.

Hence, it is evident, that the objection which the author answers in the passage now recited, relates to the secret communion of Christ with his people; and is much the same with saying, that the public

* Wilson's Defence of Reformation Principles, page 70. † Plea, &c. page 312.

corruptions of a particular church, will not warrant us to withdraw from her communion, while we have any ground for a judgement of charity, that there are any real christians in her communion. To this objection, the author sufficiently answers, that there are cases, in which we ought to decline having church communion with such as we charitably judge have communion with Christ: because our communion with them, would be a conniving at, and partaking of the sins of their public profession. But his secret communion with them, is of a different kind, and infinitely far from being liable to such an imputation. As this is not denied, so the propriety of the author's observation, considered as an answer to the objection now mentioned, seems evident. But you say, the question is about visible and public communion. What do you mean by the public communion which God holds with the members of a church?

Alex. It is visible christianity; that is, such a profession and walk, as we have a right to expect from the disciples of Christ: which profession and walk, considered as the external effect and indication of their communion with God, are a sufficient reason for our communion with them, in those ordinances which are appointed expressly for their benefit.

Ruf. We should guard against wandering from the question in debate, by altering the terms of it. It is one thing to say, that we may warrantably have sacramental communion with all those with whom God has communion. It is another thing to say, that we may warrantably have communion with all those, whose profession and walk are such as we have a right to expect in the disciples of Christ. I allow the latter proposition to be most true; and a rule of church communion, according to the scripture. But the former, which means, as I have already observed, that we are, in all cases, to hold sacramental communion with all those that have, or that can be charitably judged to have, real or secret communion with God, is manifestly false.

Alex. Why do you deny communion with God to be the rule of sacramental communion; and yet, allow a profession and walk becoming the gospel, which are the effect and indication of that communion, to be so.

Ruf. Because people's profession and external walk becoming the gospel, may well be admitted as a warrant for sacramental communion; as they may be certainly known, like any other matters of fact. But it cannot be certainly known, who they are, with whom God, in the sovereignty of his grace, holds real and spiritual communion. Many, whose profession and external conduct, are such as warrant us to have sacramental communion with them, neither have, nor ever had, any real communion with God. They have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence, and agreeably to the external order of his house; and yet, have had no real communion with him. On the other hand, God, in his sovereign way of dealing with his own people, with whom he never fails to hold communion, may leave them to fall into such open offences and backsliding, as may render a due acknowledgment of them necessary, before we can regularly have sacramental communion with them.

We have no reason to doubt, that Miriam was a saint; nor can we say that her sin, in speaking against Moses, excluded her altogether

from real communion with her God; and yet that sin caused her, by his command, to be for a time, shut out of the camp of Israel. It is evident, therefore, that the having or wanting real communion with God, cannot be a rule to direct us, with whom we ought, or ought not, to have sacramental communion.

Men's scriptural profession and practice, as they come under our notice, (and they can be a rule to us no otherwise,) are a warrant for our sacramental communion with them; but are not infallible evidences of their real communion with God. We allow, that such a profession and walk, belong to real communion with God, as common honesty in our civil dealings also does: but if ministers teach people, that these things are that communion itself, or even that they are, without any thing more, certain evidences of it, they teach people to deceive themselves.

Alex. That which we have seen and heard, says John the beloved, *declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This text, proposes our communion with God, as a sufficient reason for inviting others to have communion with us; and therefore, we may infer, that his communion with others, is a sufficient reason for our communion with them. If this invitation is to believers, the apostle is to be considered as saying, we invite you to communion with us on this principle; that we, as well as you, have communion with God. If the invitation is to unbelievers, he is to be considered as saying, come and be sharers by faith in that communion with us, which flows from communion with God.

Supposing, then, that the persons invited, became believers, and had communion with God; would it not have been singularly inconsistent, for the apostle to have said to them: Communion with God, is not a sufficient warrant for communion with us!*

Ruf. The esteem and cultivation of communion with God, ought not to be represented, as superseding the necessity of observing the order, that Christ has appointed to be observed in his church. The apostle never meant to tell any person, that it mattered not how much he disregarded this or the other Divine command; it would be no bar to their communion with him, provided he had communion with God: this communion being the sole requisite. As this supposition is absurd in itself, so it is peculiarly opposite to the scope of this epistle; which is to shew the vanity of men's pretensions to communion with God, without a habitual and prevailing respect to all his commandments. With regard to the text now quoted, the apostle speaks of that spiritual communion with the saints, which is the privilege of all believers. Now, though persons have access to this communion in general by faith only: yet, this is nothing against holding, that there are external signs of this spiritual communion, of which, even those who have already believed through grace, are not to partake, without observing a certain order which God has appointed. Thus a believer, who has habitual communion with God, ought not to approach the Lord's table, without an exercise of self-examination; nor, if he has given public offence, without acknowledging that offence, to the satisfaction of the church of God. Besides, so far as the words of the apostle here are applicable

* Plea, &c. pages 312, 313.

to sacramental communion, they are to be considered as a commendation of that communion, and a grand motive to it: namely, That the believing partakers of it, had true fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; the apostle and others attesting their experience of this fellowship, and inviting others to a participation of the same privilege. But this is very different from a particular description of the due order, according to which persons ought to approach, or be admitted to the Lord's table. To give an account of this order, is not the apostle's design here: and it is evidently one thing to say, that the excellence of the communion to be enjoyed at the Lord's table, should induce persons to come to it; and it is another thing to say, how or when they should do so.

Alex. The apostle Paul lays upon christians the injunction, in Rom. xv. 7, *Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.* This injunction has, for its immediate object, the repression of those jealousies, alienations, and divisions, which had originated from the dispute about meats and days, in the church of Rome. But the rule is general, and determines, that matters which destroy not communion with Christ, are not to destroy the communion of christians: and that, when one christian, or party of christians, sees the tokens of Christ's approbation and presence with another, it is their duty to reciprocate all the offices of christian love, after the example of Christ's kindness to them both. This, imports a command to hold communion, church communion, with all who give evidence of being in communion with Christ.*

Ruf. There is nothing in the scope or connection of the passage, in which the apostle Paul uses the words you have quoted, that serves to support the scheme of sacramental communion, among those who hold different and opposite professions of religion. The profession of the church at Rome, was then no other, than that of adherence to all the doctrine taught, and all the duty enjoined by the apostles. None of those, who are here directed to receive one another, had rejected any part of that profession: their differences related to private opinions about meats and days; the observation of which, though not necessary, was not sinful. Their disputes did not, like those of the different denominations among us, respect any part of the public profession, the public worship or government of the church of Christ at Rome. None of the parties, which the apostle here deals with, were chargeable with corrupting the word of God; with preaching another gospel, than that which the apostles preached; with changing Divine ordinances; or with introducing any human invention into their public worship; or with drawing back from the scriptural matter or manner of the profession, which that church, in her public capacity, had attained. Thus, there can be no just reasoning from the sacramental communion of these parties in Rome, to that of the different denominations among us. Farther, *the receiving of another*, to which the apostle exhorted the Romans, was in order to their joining in the same confession of faith, in the same ordinances of worship, in the observation of the same rules of church order, delivered by the apostles: for nothing less can be meant by their glorifying God with one mind and one mouth; and by their walking together in such a fellowship of the gospel, as excluded

* Plea, &c. page 314.

division and doubtful disputation. But the celebrated scheme of catholic communion, or rather catholic confusion, allows diversity of minds and mouths among partakers of the same sacramental table; even in respect of the public profession of their faith; a diversity which manifestly tends to the murmuring and disputings, which the apostle prohibits among the partakers of the same communion, Philip. ii. 14; and which it is the design of the passage under consideration to repress among the believing Romans. It is evident, then, that the persons, to whom this exhortation was first given, were members of the same particular church, and chargeable with nothing that exposed them to church censure; and therefore their receiving one another cannot be considered as parallel to the sacramental communion which persons hold with one another, who are members of different particular churches; and who, on account of the erroneous profession of one or other of these churches, ought to be censured for their avowed opinions or practices. Your observation, that matters which destroy not communion with Christ, are not to destroy the communion of christians, is true in respect of their state of communion with one another as they are members of one mystical body in Christ; and, in respect of the mutual benefit of their faith and of the exercise of love to one another expressed in prayer and charitable communications. But, as applied to sacramental communion, it is very extravagant. When persons are really united to Christ, we are sure, that no temptations of Satan or the world; no prevalence of in-dwelling sin, can destroy their communion with him. But with regard to scandalous offences, into which real saints may fall, though they cannot cut them off from communion with Christ, and ought not to hinder the exercises of love now mentioned; yet they render them liable to the censures of the church, and to suspension from sacramental communion. For, in the case of any scandal, the church has no power of censuring at all, if she has not a power of suspending from sealing ordinances, while the scandal is persisted in. The ground, as we have already seen, on which church-censure proceeds, is not the want of a saving interest in Christ, or the want of communion with him, but a specific charge of some offence.

Alex. Still you overlook the words of the text, which import, that we should receive to our communion all those whom Christ receives.

Ruf. It sufficiently appears by the view, that has now been taken of this passage, that we must limit the receiving of one another, which the apostle speaks of, to the communion of persons in the same church, making the same profession of the faith; and therefore it cannot be brought to warrant the sacramental communion of the members of different particular churches, making different and contradictory professions of religion. But, with regard to the words, *as Christ hath received us*, it may be observed, that the apostle does not here direct christians to judge concerning Christ's receiving others; but to consider how he had received themselves. He does not say, you ought to receive others, as Christ has received them; but receive one another, as Christ has received us. It is to the same purpose as if the apostle had said: Let each of you remember the tenderness and condescension which Christ manifested in receiving you; and let his manner be your pattern in receiving one another. Thus, the apostle does not say, that the fact of Christ's having received persons, in all cases, war-

rants our receiving them to sacramental communion; but he exhorts us to show our gratitude and thankfulness to him, who received us so graciously, by kindly receiving one another.

Though the negative proposition were granted, that we ought not to maintain church communion with any, whom, in the judgement of charity, we cannot think our Lord has received; yet the positive assertion would not necessarily follow, that, in all cases, we are to join in sacramental communion with those whom we charitably think Christ has received: just as, from the truth of the negative proposition, that persons ought not to be admitted to the Lord's supper without a competent measure of knowledge, we cannot conclude that all who have such knowledge ought to be admitted to that privilege; because, other qualifications also are necessary. After all, did Christ ever tell any, that there are some things, which he has taught or commanded in his word, of so little consequence, that the public denial, or contempt of them, is not to be considered either as a hindrance to his people's enjoyment of communion with himself, or as any bar to their sacramental communion with one another? Or did he ever say to the office-bearers of the church: As in the communion which I vouchsafed to you, I allowed you to disregard some of my doctrines and commands of less importance; so you must give the same allowance to those, whom you admit to sacramental communion? Let sufficient evidence be produced, that Christ has ever said so to any; and I shall offer no more objections to your scheme of catholic communion. I think, he speaks the reverse to those whom he admits to communion with himself. *A man*, says he, *who is my friend, or a lover of me, is a keeper of my words*, without any exception, *a doer of whatsover I command him.**

§ 17. *Alex.* The church of Christ is one. Every member of this body has, by a Divine constitution, both union and communion with every other member: they are united together as parts of a whole, and sympathize with each other accordingly. The members of the body of Christ have a common and unalterable interest in all the provision, which God has made for its nourishment; and that simply and absolutely, because they are members of that body. The members of the church of Christ, as such, are under the obligation of God's authority to recognise each other's character and privileges, and consequently not to deny the tokens of such recognition. Sacramental communion is one of those tokens; and therefore the members of the church of Christ, as such, are under the obligation of God's authority to recognise their relation to Christ and to each other, by joining together in sacramental communion. Nor has any church upon earth the power to refuse a seat at the Lord's table to one, whose conversation is such as becomes the gospel.†

Ruf. I admit all this; but cannot see how it serves in the least, to justify your scheme. The church of Christ is one: considered as invisible, her unity lies in her having one Head; and in the in-dwelling of one Spirit in him and in all her members: considered as visible, her unity lies in her acknowledgment of the same Head; and in the conformity of her profession and practice to the truths and institutions, which he has delivered in his word. Errors and corruptions, openly persisted in, against the public profession of any particular church, are

* John xiv. 23. xv. 14. † Plea, &c. pages 15, 16.

contrary to this visible unity of the church of Christ; and therefore they ought not to be tolerated in her communion.

True believers are members of the church invisible; and, as such, are liable to God's fatherly chastisements for their iniquities: and, as members of the visible church, they may be liable to her censure, for their public offences, as well as others. Every error or corruption, in opposition to the reformation already attained by the church of Christ, is such an offence: it is a deviation from a conversation becoming the gospel. While any person openly and obstinately adheres to such a deviation, he cannot regularly sit down at the Lord's table with a church whose profession or testimony expressly condemns it. In this case, the church is far from denying his unalienable interest in the provisions of Christ's house: but so far as these provisions are to be dealt out by stewards, his people may expect to receive them no otherwise, than according to the order which he has appointed to be observed in the distribution of them: an order, which requires, that the Lord's supper should not be dispensed to any till they profess their adherence to the confession or testimony of the church of Christ; while nothing is found in that confession or testimony, but what is consonant to his word.

Nor is it denied, that the members of the church of Christ, as such, are under the obligation of God's authority to recognise each other's character and privileges, and to act towards one another accordingly. But this recognising includes, not only a judgement of charity concerning the gracious state of a church member, but also, a distinct knowledge of the conformity of his present profession and practice to the word of God. According to this recognising, the sacred symbols are to be given to the professed friends of all the truths and institutions of Christ; nor can we give them to any other without being chargeable with unfaithfulness to the Master of the feast.

Alex. The Lord Jesus Christ gave all church privileges to his church catholic; and from this catholic grant do all particular churches derive their right to whatever privileges they enjoy. The members of all true churches have, therefore, the very same right to the Lord's table. By what authority, then, does any particular church refuse to admit christians, from other particular churches, to the sacramental table? It may be said to a church, chargeable with such refusal, it is the Lord's table, not yours.*

Ruf. The right of all, that belong to the catholic visible church, is not disputed. But when a particular church, endeavouring to adhere faithfully to a pure profession of Divine truths, refuses to admit the openly erroneous and corrupt, whether they be usual members of that church or not, to the sacramental table, what she refuses such persons, is not the regular use or enjoyment of their right, but only the abuse of it; for men are chargeable with such abuse, whenever they depart from the order, that Christ has appointed in the participation of his ordinances. We disapprove of communicating with other churches, not because they are other churches; but, because they are erroneous and corrupt: and, if we refuse to admit their members to communicate with us; it is because they avow their obstinate attachment to the errors and corruptions of these churches. It is the very reason

* Plea, &c. pages 18, 19.

why we dare not admit them, that the table is not ours, but the Lord's. It is his table; and therefore the order appointed in his word, ought to be strictly observed: no open and obstinate opposer of any of his truths or institutions, acknowledged in the confession of the church, in which this ordinance is dispensed, can be regularly or honestly admitted to it by the office-bearers of that church.

§ 18. *Alex.* Let us place the subject in another light. Is it, or is it not, the duty of christians, in all true churches, to shew forth the Lord's death in the sacrament of the supper? If it is not, then we have true churches and christians, under no obligation to observe the most characteristic and discriminating of the christian ordinances. Here is a contradiction nearly in terms. For who can acknowledge a true church without sacraments? If it is, it would be a great corruption, a grievous sin in those churches, to expel or neglect their sacraments: and, on the other hand, in celebrating the sacraments, do they not perform an acceptable service to God?*

Ruf. We are to distinguish between the validity of an ordinance, and the regular manner of performing it. It is granted, that it is the duty of true churches, however corrupt, to shew forth the Lord's death in the sacrament of the supper; and that so far as the participation of this ordinance is in faith, so far it is an acceptable service to God; and yet the manner of performing this duty may be, in a great measure, irregular and sinful. Thus, Jacob's application to his father Isaac for the blessing was successful; and from Jacob's general character as a believer, and from his esteem of the birth-right and the blessing, it appears that his application for the blessing, absolutely considered, was accepted of God; though the manner of his application, by lying and deceiving his father, was criminal. We allow, that it is the duty of Episcopal and Independent churches to ordain ministers; and that their ordination is valid; so that we do not re-ordain ministers, who join with us after having received the ordination of those churches. Yet, we justly consider the manner of their ordination so irregular and unscriptural, that we could not warrantably consent to the ordination of a minister in either of these ways. So we allow a marriage to be valid, however irregular the manner of it may have been; and however sinful it would have been for us to have concurred with, or countenanced it.

Hence, though we lament, that there is much sin in the manner of celebrating the Lord's supper in corrupt churches; yet we hold, that their neglecting to celebrate that precious ordinance would be far more sinful. The sinful defect in the manner of performing a duty is one evil; and the utter neglect of it is another. It must be very absurd for any to think of lessening the former, by running into the latter, which is still more grossly criminal.

Alex. How should an act of communion in the body and blood of Christ be lawful and commanded to a person in one true church; and be unlawful and forbidden to the same person in another? How should two persons both honor the Redeemer by communicating in their respective churches, and both dishonor him, by the very same thing, if they should happen to exchange places?†

* Plea, &c. page 20. † Id. pages 20, 21.

Ruf. It is certain, that the same action, as to the matter of it, which, in some circumstances is morally evil, may, in other circumstances, be less evil, or even morally good. Thus, the assistance we give our neighbour in his worldly employment, which would be morally evil on the Lord's day, may be morally good on any other day of the week. In the present case, since the act of communicating with any particular church necessarily implies, as was formerly shewn, a public agreement with the particular profession made by that church, of the christian religion; it is evident, that the act of communicating in a church, whose profession is unfaithful or corrupt, must involve a person in the sinfulness of that profession, which he would not be involved in by the same act in a church that makes a purer profession.

§ 19. *Alex.* Why do you demand more, than the evidence of christian character as a qualification for communion with you?*

Ruf. We should not attempt to impose on one another by ambiguous expressions. If, by christian character, you mean a person's profession of so much of christianity as he or others judge to be necessary to salvation, or what you call the essentials of religion, the reason has been already given why such a defective profession cannot warrant sacramental communion. But, if by christian character you mean a person's credible profession of adhering to the whole of the christian religion in principle and practice, I never said or thought, that more than the character of a christian, in that sense, should be required of any in order to sacramental communion. But this can never be reconciled to the scheme of sacramental communion with churches and their members; whose peculiar communion, (considered not absolutely, but as distinct from, and opposite to that of other churches;) has no other basis than a pertinacious denial of one or other of the truths or duties of God's word, acknowledged in the profession of some other church or churches.

Alex. All believers having the thing signified, being partakers of Christ and his benefits, have a perfect right to the sacramental sign; they have an interest in Christ, and therefore are the proper recipients of those ordinances, the use of which is to confirm that interest to their faith. All believers are engaged in the service of Christ, and should partake of the Lord's supper, as a sign of their engagement.†

Ruf. This has been repeatedly answered already. It is the duty of all christians to come to the Lord's table: but they should come according to the due order. They are first to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: they are then to examine themselves; they are to make a profession of their faith in Christ, and of their purpose of obedience to all his commands; and, if they have offended the church of Christ by public errors in principle or practice, they ought publicly to renounce them; the office-bearers in the church, who would be faithful to their trust, will by no means admit to sacramental communion those who openly refuse to comply with any part of this order. The truth is, believers, so far as grace is in exercise, will not desire to come forward in any other way. It is in the Lord's own way, that they look for comfortable communion with himself.

In the sacraments, as the Lord Christ gives himself to them, so they give themselves to him, and to his service, according to his word.

* Plea, &c. page 21. † Id. pages 22, 23.

But how inconsistent is this with the scheme of joining in sacramental communion with those churches which, we own, have, by their public profession, rejected, and continue to reject, some of the truths or institutions of Jesus Christ, which all his servants ought to receive and maintain.

Alex. The participation of the Lord's supper serves, as a badge, to distinguish the church from the world, the follower from the foe of Christ Jesus: but you make it a badge to distinguish the church from the church, the follower from the follower, the friend from the friend of Christ Jesus.*

Ruf. The sacraments, as we have already seen, are to be administered to none, otherwise than according to the discipline of the church. But, by that holy discipline, a pure church is to be distinguished not only from the world, but from corrupt and degenerate churches; and the more faithful friends and followers of Christ from those, that, in any part of their profession, are openly unfaithful. We must either allow this, or deny that there is any warrantable secession from what may be called a church, however corrupt or degenerate; or any warrantable exercise of discipline, but upon infidels or the openly profane; that is, upon such as are without the church, and not under her jurisdiction at all. This is very absurd; for, says the apostle, *what have I to judge, them that are without? Do ye not judge them that are within?*

The question which we are now considering is, whether churches and their members, that are in a state of warrantable secession from a corrupt church, may still have sacramental communion with that church on account of the essentials of the christian religion, which she is supposed to retain? This question is quite different from that about the lawfulness of secession: it is a question which supposes that, in some cases, secession from a corrupt church is warrantable.

Alex. They, who have a right to sacramental communion any where, have a right to it every where; and conversely, they who have not a right to it every where, have a right to it no where.†

Ruf. If you mean that this right is the same in other churches that differ in their local situation only, your assertion is true: but if you mean that this right is the same in churches that in some articles of religion, make different and opposite public professions, your assertion must appear quite wrong and extravagant to any who seriously consider what, I think, has been sufficiently shewn, viz. that the public profession of christianity, which we make in the act of communicating with any particular church, neither is nor can be any other than the profession made by that particular church. Hence it cannot be equally warrantable to communicate with a church, which makes an unfaithful profession of religion; as it is to communicate with one whose profession is faithful: unless we suppose it to be as warrantable to make an unfaithful as it is to make a faithful, profession. A professor must be very like the Roman proconsul Gallio,‡ before he can be satisfied, that he has as good a right to join in sacramental communion with a backsliding degenerate church, as with a faithful reforming one. How little account must such a professor make of all the Lord's work in

* Plea, &c. page 23. † Id. page 24. ‡ Acts xviii. 17.

bringing a particular church to any measure of purity that she has attained!

Alex. No qualification for sacramental communion may, by the law of Christ, be exacted from any individual, other than visible christianity; that is, a profession and practice becoming the gospel, without regard to those sectarian differences, which consist with the substance of evangelical truth.*

Ruf. When you say, that the qualifications for sacramental communion are a profession and practice becoming the gospel, I agree with you, that nothing more is requisite; supposing, however, that the profession of the truth is full, no part of the testimony of Jesus being designedly omitted; particular, in direct opposition to the particular errors that prevail; open, or avowed before the world, whatever reproaches or hardships it may occasion; and that the practice of him who makes this profession is conformable to it. A profession and practice, in this sense, becoming the gospel, embrace the whole christian religion. But how does this comport with the scheme of holding sacramental communion with churches, in whose profession and avowed practice, we acknowledge, there are so many things contrary to the word of God, and not becoming the gospel, that on account of these things, we justly refuse to become habitual members of them? But what is meant by sectarian differences, which consist with the substance of evangelical truth? The grounds of these differences either are, or are not, truths revealed, and duties enjoined in the word of God. If they be such truths and duties, then they are not sectarian tenets; they ought to be held by the whole catholic church. But if they are not, then they are opinions or inventions of men, that ought to have no place in our religious profession at all. Any part of the catholic church, obstinately retaining such tenets becomes thereby a sect. Such tenets, though they may be held by some who profess much evangelical truth, yet will never agree with that truth; and the obstinate maintainers and propagators of them ought to be censured by the catholic church.

Besides the immense difference between what is of Heaven, and what is of men, we are expressly forbidden to add any thing to that religion which God has given us in his word. Though a particular church and her members hold evangelical truth; yet if they add any thing to it, or take away any thing from it, they are still liable to the censure of the church of Christ.

* Plea, &c. page 24.

DIALOGUE IV.

The instances of sacramental communion recorded in the New Testament, no examples of the catholic communion in question.....The charge of unchurching other churches, and of spiritual pride on account of our declining sacramental communion with those from whom we are in a state of secession, shewn to be unjust.....Declining to attend on the public administrations of ministers on account of their erroneous profession, lawful..... The promotion of love to the brethren by this catholic communion, considered.....Of the evils said to arise from our limiting sacramental communion to such as make the same public profession.....The nature and tendency of this catholic communion inferred from what has been advanced in the preceding conversations.

ALEXANDER and RUFUS, having met one evening, their conversation turned on the excellencies of the holy scriptures; particularly, on the wisdom and condescension manifested by their Divine Author, in adapting them to the various capacities of mankind.

Ruf. This appears eminently in the history of the scriptures. In the preceptive part, duties are declared with nervous brevity. But, in the historical part, a pertinent example often gives a clearer, and far more affecting view of a duty, than what we could obtain from the best abstract definition. Besides, some duties are proposed rather in examples for our imitation, than in formal precepts. This is particularly the case with those duties, which belong to the order and government of the church.

§ 20. *Alex.* This puts me in mind of an argument for catholic communion from several examples recorded in the New Testament.

One of these examples occurs in the case of the converts under Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost; when the Jews, pricked in their hearts, cried out, "*Brethren, what shall we do?* the apostle replied, *Repent, and be baptised every one of you: be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.** This is the very first prerequisite for admission to sealing ordinances; the only qualifications are repenting, or a change of all their erroneous notions concerning the person of Christ, his kingdom and his work, receiving the truth in its simplicity; and believing in the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of sinners by the blood of his cross; a faith manifested by a credible profession of his name.†

Ruf. I agree with your representation of the import of the apostle's exhortation, and of the terms on which these converts were received into communion. When they break the sacramental bread together, they were of one mind, HOMOTHUMADON, they were unanimous in their adherence to the apostle's doctrine, worship, and discipline, not a dissenting voice. This is a complete pattern of the sacramental communion, which I plead for.

How greatly different is this from the motley mixture of persons sitting down at the Lord's table whose public professions, prayers, and thanksgivings necessarily and expressly contradict one another; as must be the case, when Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Independents, Arminians, and others hold sacramental communion together.

* Acts ii. 37, 38. † Plea, &c. pages 28, 29.

Alex. The apostle mentioned only the great doctrines of faith and repentance: how does it follow that he required their agreement in less matters?

Ruf. I think, you should not attempt to evade the evidence of this example, after you have acknowledged, that the converts were admitted to communion, on this occasion, upon a change of their erroneous notions concerning the person, kingdom and work of Christ, and upon their receiving the truth in its simplicity. When you spoke of their erroneous notions and of the truth, I suppose, you meant the whole truth professed by the apostles and all erroneous notions contrary to that truth. There is nothing in the passage but what tends to confirm this view of the matter. When it is said, they continued in the doctrine of the apostles, it is plainly supposed, that they had, by a public profession embraced that doctrine: which doctrine undoubtedly included all the truths and institutions of the Lord Jesus; all that can warrantably belong to the profession of any part of the catholic church at this day.

It is true, the apostles are not said, in the account of their admission of persons to sacramental communion, to have expressly mentioned every article belonging to the public profession of the christian religion. But it, by no means, follows, that such an article did not belong to the profession made on that occasion; or that the apostle would have admitted them, if they had openly professed the contrary error. It would be an endless task, indeed, on such an occasion, to specify all the articles of the christian religion scattered through the Old and New Testament. This is so absurd, that I know of none who attempt it. But there are two things which faithful office-bearers of the church will be careful to attend to: one is, that they will not admit any to sacramental communion, who publicly profess a notion that is opposite to any one article of scripture-truth, which the church, they belong to, exhibits in her public profession. The other thing is, that, if there be any article of the church's profession, which is peculiarly controverted, peculiarly an occasion of reproach, no matter whether it be comparatively great or small, provided, only, that it be a truth revealed, or a duty enjoined in the word of God; a faithful office-bearer in the house of God, will scarcely fail, in that case, to require of one, whom he admits to sacramental communion, an express adherence to such a truth or duty. So Peter and the other apostles required of those, whom they admitted to that communion, a particular and express declaration of their belief of this truth, That Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, was the Messiah, the Christ of God; not only on account of its infinite importance, but also on account of the opposition it met with, which rendered it at that time eminently the word of his patience.

Alex. Another example occurs in the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Philip, the evangelist, instructed him from a passage of Isaiah in the doctrine of Jesus the Messiah, and in the nature and use of the Christian sacraments. This is supposed in the question of the Eunuch, *What hinders me to be baptised?* Philip replied, that, if he sincerely believed in Jesus, he might. The Eunuch answered, I believe, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Upon this profession he was baptised. Thus, a sealing ordinance was administered to the Eunuch upon no

other terms, than a credible profession of the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Ruf. Some advocates for what they call catholic communion, have argued from this text, that all the profession of christianity, requisite in order to sacramental communion, is a declared assent to such propositions as these peculiarly recommended in the scripture: That Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that he came in the flesh; and that he rose from the dead;—without any regard to the truths implied in, or connected with them. Thus, their sacramental communion will be extensive indeed: it will comprehend all that bear the christian name. For, however widely different their views may be of the import of these propositions; they all, even the grossest heretics, declare their adherence to the letter of them. And, indeed, unless these propositions be taken in this way, it is vain to allege them as favouring the scheme of catholic communion. For if it once be admitted, that in assenting to such a profession, the Eunuch assented to whatever is necessarily implied in it, and connected with it; then, it will follow, that the Eunuch assented to all the doctrines and duties exhibited in the Westminster confession and catechisms: for it would be easy to shew, that all these doctrines, supposing them to be contained in the scriptures, are implied in, or connected with this proposition; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Nor have we any reason to think, that if the Eunuch had openly professed, that he rejected any one of these doctrines or duties, Philip would have admitted him to baptism. According to your own confession, Philip instructed him in the doctrine of Jesus, the Messiah, and in the nature and use of the sacraments. The sacraments themselves, are an epitome of the christian religion: there is nothing belonging to the doctrine, worship, discipline or government of the church, which is not implied in, or connected with, the correct and regular use of them.

Alex. A third example occurs in the history of Saul. Upon what grounds was he admitted to the sacrament of baptism? Simply on the ground of his belonging to Christ. For on this ground, Christ himself placed it. *He is a chosen vessel unto me*, saith the Redeemer. That the knowledge of this fact was communicated to Ananias, is of no weight in the present argument. For the question is not, how we are to ascertain a man's christianity. But whether, on supposition of its being ascertained, (which is always supposed, when we admit its existence,) it is, in and of itself, a sufficient title to gospel ordinances, in whatever part of the catholic church they may happen to be dispensed. If it is not, if any thing more than the evidence of christian character be requisite, to create, both the right and the obligation to reciprocal communion, it is clear, that an immediate revelation from God, certifying such a character, could not form a valid claim to communion; the apostle elect of the Gentiles would have gone unbaptised.

Ruf. There is no doubt, that a true believer, or one belonging to Christ, has a right, *in foro Dei*, or before God, to all the ordinances of the church. The apostle says to believers: *All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.* But here we speak

* Plea, &c. pages 29, 30.

of a title to ordinances *in foro humano vel ecclesiæ*, that is, before men or the church. Who are true believers, or who belong to Christ, cannot be certainly known by man. That any should judge the spiritual and secret state of other men, is contrary to the express command of the apostle, Rom. xiv. 10, 13. *Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ. Let us not judge one another any more.* Hence, it is evident, that the ground, on which the office-bearers of the church are to proceed in admitting persons to sacramental communion, and on which other members are to join with them, cannot be simply, that such persons belong to Christ; this being a matter which, in ordinary cases, cannot be certainly known, and which we are forbidden to judge. You say, that the existence of a man's christianity is to be admitted, as a sufficient title to gospel ordinances. If by christianity, you mean a man's being in a state of grace, or his being united to Christ, (and the expression, *belonging to Christ*, leads to this sense,) such an opinion is to be disapproved for the reason just now given. It seems to be much the same with the notion of some Independents; which is, that the ground upon which persons are to be admitted to sealing ordinances, is positive evidence of their regeneration and union to Christ; and their public declaration of their experience of the saving operation of the Holy Spirit on their hearts. But this opinion, does not consist with the representation of the visible church, either in the Old Testament, or in the New. Moses said to the people of Israel, with regard to the greater part of them, *The Lord hath not given you hearts to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear, until this day. I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck.** Nor is the visible church otherwise represented in the New Testament, particularly, in the parables of the tares, of the draught of fishes, and of the ten virgins.† This opinion is contrary to the end of a gospel ministry; which is for the conversion and begetting of faith in the members of the visible church, as well as for the increase of their faith, and progressive sanctification. It tends to overthrow the necessary distinction between the visible and invisible church. Or, by a man's christianity, you mean, his credible profession of the essentials of our holy religion. This notion, we formerly considered; and it appeared, that no person has a title to sealing ordinances, in any particular church of Christ, upon a profession of his adherence to the more important articles of her confession, while he openly and obstinately rejects the rest; these being equally agreeable to the word of God with the other. Or, by a man's christianity, you mean, his public profession of adherence to all the truths and institutions of Jesus Christ, and a becoming practice; without which, his profession would not be credible. This indeed is a sufficient ground for the office-bearers of the church to proceed upon in admitting any person to sealing ordinances: I may say, it is the only scriptural ground. Nor is there any thing contrary to this assertion in the account of Paul's admission to baptism upon his conversion. There was nothing that could be justly considered as a hindrance to his admission. The circumstances of his conversion were miraculous; but then they were attended with irresistable evidence. Ananias, indeed, complained of Paul's having been a violent persecutor of the

* Deut. xxix. 4. † Matth. xiii. 28, 29, 30, 47, 48. xxv. 1, 2.

church of Christ. But Paul had now obtained mercy; and had made a profession of unlimited subjection to the Divine will, saying, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* It could not be said, that after his conversion, he had opposed any truth or institution of the Lord Christ, essential, or non-essential. There was nothing in this case, like the catholic communion which is now pleaded for: here was no admission of a person refusing, in any one point, an adherence to the public profession of the particular church, to which Ananias belonged.

Alex. The fourth example, occurs in the case of Cornelius, the first Gentile admitted into the christian church. While Peter was opening up the plan of salvation, *the Holy Ghost*, fell on all them who heard the word.* This descent of the Holy Ghost, was the sole principle on which the apostle pronounced them to be fit subjects for sacramental recognition; *and*, actually admitted them to all the privileges of the christian church.

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, they of the circumcision contended with him. His defence, after a succinct history of the steps by which he was led to the house of Cornelius, of his preaching there, and of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon his Gentile hearers, is concluded in these words: *Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John, indeed, baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch, then, as God gave them like gifts, as he did unto us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?* The brethren were satisfied, and glorified God, saying, *Then has God granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life.*† Why should it not be so still? Why should not such proof of christian character in others, no matter where, be at this hour, as it was then, the rule of christian fellowship on the broadest scale? The proofs on which it should proceed, according to this example, consist in these four particulars; 1st, That God has given them the Holy Spirit; 2nd, that God has borne witness to them as his children, and heirs of the promise; 3d, that God has put them upon a perfect level with ourselves, by this testimony to their faith in Christ: so that whatever privileges we have, they have also; and are entitled to receive *with* us, and *from* us: 4th, that, under this evidence of their gracious relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, to refuse them the seal of that relation, were to resist God. Why should not a refusal of that communion to any whom we own, that God has owned, by the the same tokens which he has given to us, be now, as it would have been then, a withstanding of God?‡

Ruf. It may be observed, that the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Centurion's family, may be considered, as a communication of his miraculous gifts; and, in this respect, was designed to signify the admission of the Gentiles into the New Testament church: as is evident from the representation of the matter in Peter's vision; and also from the conclusion which the brethren drew from Peter's relation of the affair. *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.* From this it followed, that persons were no more to be excluded from the privileges of the christian church, because they were Gentiles. To have refused sacramental communion with them on that ground, would have been to resist God. But it does not follow, that

* Acts x. 44. † Acts xi. 16, 17, 18. ‡ Plea, &c. pages 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.

it would have been unlawful to have secluded them from that communion, if they had refused to make the same profession of faith in Christ, which the apostles made; or, if they had openly and obstinately rejected some doctrine or command of Christ, delivered by the apostles; as you suppose, according to your catholic scheme, that it is unlawful for a particular church to seclude persons from sacramental communion, who avow their opposition to this, and the other, article of her scriptural profession.

But, supposing the descent of the Holy Spirit on them had signified, that he was given them as a Spirit of faith; it does not follow, that those who were under his influence did not profess to receive the whole doctrine of the apostles; or, that if they had avowed their rejection of any article of that doctrine, the apostle, in refusing the sacramental seal to such persons, would have been guilty of withstanding God. I think, it is not difficult for any one to see the inconsistency and fallacy of such reasoning as this: "God has given his "Spirit to such people; he has borne witness to them as his children, "and heirs of the promise: he has put them on a perfect level with "ourselves, by this testimony to their faith in Christ: they are partakers of the same privileges, entitled to receive *with* and *from* us; "and therefore it is to be concluded, that though the opinions and "practices which they avow and profess to maintain, manifestly contradict both the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures, and also the "scriptural profession of a particular church of Christ; yet they are, "on account of their gracious state and privileges as children of God, "to be exempted from all admonition or rebuke: for, if they were "subject to such censure, they might, if obstinate, be suspended from "sealing ordinances; which suspension, in their case, is supposed to "be a withstanding of God. They are to receive with us and from "us; though, by such receiving, the order, that God has appointed to "to be observed in his house, be manifestly violated." How self-contradictory is such a doctrine? Persons are supposed to have received the Holy Spirit; and, on that account, are under a peculiar obligation to hold nothing but what is agreeable to his word; and yet their avowed opposition to what is agreeable to the word is, on the very same account, to pass without censure. Their spiritual privileges are great, and the greatness of them aggravates their offences; and yet on account of these privileges, their offences are so much extenuated as to infer no censure. The church is bound to censure the offences of the saints more than those of any other, because they are saints; and yet, for the same reason, the great offence given by their avowed obstinacy in error and corruption is, for the sake of catholic communion, to pass without any reproof or admonition at all: for there can be no sincere use of these censures, when the open contempt of them does not subject the offender to farther censure, and, in the case of obstinacy, to suspension from sealing ordinances. Wilfully to violate the appointed order of God's house, is to withstand him; and yet, according to the doctrine of catholic communion, we withstand him, unless we violate that order. Surely we should beware of imputing such absurdity to the doctrine and example of the apostles. The truth is, their sacramental communion was on the broadest scale, in this respect, that every partaker of it professed to receive their whole doctrine;

worship and discipline. They enjoined all their communicants to stand fast, and hold the traditions; that is, the truths and duties which the apostles taught them, whether by epistles written to them, or by word of mouth, 2 Thes. ii. 15. This brings to my mind a passage of an excellent writer to this purpose: "It is, in some respects, strange," says he, "that these very persons, who are loudest in preaching up "catholic love to all saints without exception, should seem to forget "that catholic love to all scriptural truths and duties is at least equal-"ly needful and equally enjoined. Those who so often and so warm-"ly, though in a vague and indefinite way, inculcate charity towards "the weakest and the least of the friends of Christ, should not fail in "their regard to any of the ordinances and commands of Jesus, under "pretence of their being little ones. Have they forgot what he hath "said, *Teach them to observe all things? And whosoever shall break "one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, shall be "called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and "teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven,* "Math. v. 19. and again, *He that is faithful in that which is least, is "faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also "in much*, Luke, xvi. 10."*

Alex. You have not duly considered what I observed, that the descent of the Holy Spirit on the family and friends of Cornelius being a visible proof of God's acceptance, was the sole principle on which the apostle pronounced them to be fit subjects for sacramental communion; and actually admitted them to all the privileges of the christian church.†

Ruf. I have considered it as an extraordinary appearance of God, declaring his will that the privileges of the church were not to be refused to the Gentiles, *as* or *because* they were Gentiles. In this view, it served to correct an error; but has no bearing on the present question about the terms, on which persons are to be received into sacramental communion. I have also considered it as respecting their gracious state and God's acceptance of them; and in this respect, it is denied to be the sole principle or the rule, according to which the apostle proceeded, and set an example to be followed by the church afterwards, in admitting persons to baptism: in the first place, because their partaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking with tongues, did not necessarily belong to their duty or character as christians, Math. vii. 22. 1 Corinth. xiii. 1, 2. In the second place, because their profession of receiving the whole doctrine taught them by the apostle preceded their baptism; as is necessarily understood, both from the practice of the apostles in other instances; and, in this case, from their speaking with tongues; in which exercise they, no doubt, declared their cordial reception of the word of God, which they had heard. And in the third place, because the partaking of the Holy Spirit, in respect of the extraordinary gifts, without a credible profession of the faith, could be no example to be followed by the church as a rule; since the communication of such gifts hath ceased. In fine, the scheme of catholic communion cannot

* Mr. Bruce's True Patriotism, a discourse which breathes the true spirit of our old Reformers, such as Calvin, Beza, Welch, Rutherford.

† Plea, &c. page 32.

pretend to derive any support or countenance from this example; unless these persons had openly declared that they differed in some things not deemed essential, from the doctrine and profession of the apostles; and unless Peter had, notwithstanding this declaration, admitted them on the sole principle of their being saints and partakers of the Holy Spirit; a supposition which cannot consist either with the sacred history or with the character of the apostles.

Alex. I shall state another example only; which occurs in the history of the reference from Antioch, and of the proceeding thereon by the synod of Jerusalem in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the apostles. Certain men, ministers of the word, who had come down from Judea, taught the brethren and said, *Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* This false doctrine, tending to subvert the entire fabric of evangelical truth, Paul and Barnabas firmly resisted. After much dissention and disputation, it was determined to refer the question to the apostles and presbyters at Jerusalem. The synod at Jerusalem, having accepted the reference, and having taken the subject into consideration, condemned the doctrine which had raised the ferment in Antioch; prohibited the preaching of it in future, and, with regard to remaining differences, advised both parties to forbearance and love.

Hence I observe, that this venerable synod distinguished between a prime essential of christianity, the justification of a sinner by faith alone, on the one hand, and important differences, on the other, which left both sides in possession of the substantial truth. The synod would not endure, no, not for one hour, the least infringement upon the former. But they would not countenance the spirit of schism and separation for the sake of the latter: with respect to which they enjoined bearing and forbearing.*

Ruf. Before you proceed any farther, I beg leave to offer a remark. The distinction between essentials and non-essentials has been already considered; and the portion of sacred history, to which you refer, affords no occasion, that I can see, to resume that subject. It is evident, that this synod gave no example of forbearing, even in any matter not essential. They condemned, as you have observed, the pernicious error of the Judaizing teachers about the necessity of men's being circumcised, as the condition of their justification and salvation. We read also of an opinion of some, that it was necessary to circumcise the Gentile converts, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. But this tenet also the synod of Jerusalem rejected; and allowed no forbearance of it.

Alex. Prejudice herself must confess, that the variance between the Gentile and Jewish believers on the subject of circumcision and of the Mosaic law generally, even without the notion of its necessity to salvation, was much wider, than the variance between many christians, who will not commune together in the body and blood of their common Lord.†

Ruf. The observation of circumcision and other parts of the Mosaic law, without the notion of its necessity in order to salvation, was, as yet, no way sinful. "Mosaical worship," as Dr. Owen observes,‡

* Plea, &c. pages 35, 36. † Id. page 37.

‡ In the preface to his Commentary on the epistle to the Hebrews.

"was not utterly to cease, so as to have no acceptance with God, until "the final ruin of the Jewish church foretold by our Saviour. The "things prescribed by the ceremonial law were in themselves indifferent; yet the observation of them, from a pure reverence of their original institution, was not displeasing to God; while he had not yet "brought out all the evidence, which he designed to afford, of their "abolition, particularly by the demolishing of the temple; after which "no mutual forbearance was to be exercised about that observance." If such indifferent things give offence to weak brethren, they ought to be abstained from; as the Gentile converts, according to the decree of this synod, were to abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled. ' The purport of this decree, as Calvin in his institutions* observes, was to enjoin, not an observation of the ceremonial law, but an observation of the moral law; in abstaining from giving offence to weak brethren by things in themselves indifferent. It is evident, that such indifferent things, or things which a church's profession has not determined, according to the word of God, to be either sin or duty, ought to be no bars to sacramental communion. Such were the ceremonial rites, that were still practised by the believing Jews; they were, as yet, indifferent things; and therefore, while there is any thing really sinful in the differences between the parties, that you suppose should have sacramental communion together; that difference is incomparably greater, than any which was allowed by this synod to continue between the Jewish converts and the Gentile believers.

I have often wondered how any who hold the *jus Divinum*, the Divine right of Presbyterial church government, could ever fall in with the catholic scheme of sacramental communion. According to that scriptural form of government, a presbytery or synod has authority, from the Lord Christ, to pass acts concerning the discipline of the church and the order of public worship; which acts, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word of God, but for the ministerial authority, by which they are enacted. Such acts are to be regarded, not merely as advices or recommendations; but as authoritative decisions: nor can the avowed and obstinate opposers of them be admitted consistently with the principles of Presbyterial church-government, to communion with the church in sealing ordinances; for such opposition, besides the evil of not receiving a rule which is agreeable to the word of God, is a manifest trampling upon the authority which God has given to the office-bearers of his house, for edification, and not for destruction. So this meeting of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem is said to have ordained decrees. There were two cases before them: one was, that of the Judaizing teachers; the other was that of the offence, which the Jewish converts had taken at the Gentiles, for refusing to observe the law of Moses. With regard to the former case, they condemned the Judaizing teachers and their doctrine: with regard to the latter, they decreed, that the Gentiles, in order to avoid offending their Jewish brethren, should abstain, not only from fornication, which was in itself a moral evil; but also, while the present occasion of offence continued, from some things in themselves

* Lib. iv. cap. 10. sect. 21.

indifferent; namely, from meats offered to idols, from things strangled, and from blood: and they laid a burden upon the Gentiles as to those necessary things.

Now there is no reason to doubt, that, while the occasion of these decrees continued, wilful and obstinate opposition to them, even in those things that were in themselves indifferent, would be sufficient to preclude persons from sacramental communion. No church member could refuse the burden of these necessary things, and despise the authority of this synod, without censure. Paul and Silas, as they went through the cities, delivered to the churches *these decrees for to keep*; that is, they delivered them, as belonging, to the rule of church communion.

Warranted by this example, a church, as represented by her ministers and elders, may pass many acts agreeable to the word of God, conducive to the maintaining of truth and peace in the church, though not immediately relating to what are usually termed the essentials of the christian religion; and may lawfully refuse to admit the open contemners and opposers of these acts, to sacramental communion.

On the whole, the example of this synod is so far from favouring the scheme of catholic communion, that it is directly opposite to it; and manifestly affords an effectual refutation of it.

Alex. Was Paul's circumcision of Timothy, of which we have an account in the third verse of the next chapter, agreeable to the decision of this synod?

Ruf. Yes; the synod's decision specified some things in themselves indifferent, which were to be abstained from for avoiding the offence of weaker brethren. Some other legal ceremonies, in the same case, might be considered in the same light: among these was circumcision; which, therefore, might still be lawfully used for preventing the offence of the Jewish converts. Had Paul taught, that circumcision was in itself necessary as a commanded duty, like baptism or the Lord's supper, he would have contradicted the synod's decision; but, in the simple use of it, as an indifferent thing, merely for avoiding offence, he proceeded upon the principle, and adhered to the spirit, of that decision.

§ 21. *Alex.* To refuse church communion with a church or with her members is, in effect, to unchurch her, and to declare, that she is no church, and that her members are no followers of Jesus Christ. At least, it is a declaration, that they are so very corrupt, as to render their communion unlawful. Now such a declaration, whether expressed or implied, can be received as nothing less, on the part of those who make it, than excommunication in disguise; but a disguise so thin, that it might as well be dropt: excommunication being a judicial exclusion from the communion of the church on account of the unworthiness of the excommunicated; or on account of the unlawfulness of holding communion with them. Your conduct in refusing communion with a church or individuals, and justifying the refusal by the plea of their corruptions, is a virtual denial of their visible christianity; and having already the substance, wants nothing but the form, of an excommunicating act. This consequence, viz. the virtual unchurching and excommunicating all the churches and people of God upon earth,

with whom we refuse communion, is so dreadful that any christian heart shrinks from it with fear and horror.*

Ruf. I have already mentioned the important distinction between a true church and a pure church. A church may retain the principal doctrines and ordinances of the christian religion in her profession, in such a measure, that she may be justly called a true church; and yet she may, as an ecclesiastical body, have such errors in doctrine; such human inventions as integral parts of her worship; such unscriptural officers and usages in her government; or may be chargeable with such defection from reformation, formerly attained, that we cannot be faithful to the cause of Christ, which, in these respects, is opposed; nor to the catholic church, for whose true interest we are bound to use our best endeavours; nor to the souls of men, which are deeply injured by such evils; without withdrawing from her communion. A particular church, in this case, though she ceases to be *a pure* church, may still be called *a true* church of Christ on account of the measure, in which she retains the profession of his truths and ordinances. Though continuing in her communion be sinful; yet that sinfulness does not take away, as I formerly observed, the validity of her ordinances. Nor are we to limit the sovereignty of the grace of God, as to the use he may make of what is agreeable to his own word, in the doctrine and administrations of such a church, both for the conversion of sinners and for promoting the sanctification of his people. As continuing in the communion of such a backsliding church is sinful; so is every act of communion: because, as has been already observed, in that act, a person cannot make any other profession of the christian religion, than the public profession of the particular church with which he communicates. His sin, in this matter, is more or less aggravated, according to his own profession of religion, according to his knowledge of the evils of that church's profession; and according to his other attainments. But we have as little reason, on this account, to conclude that there are no followers of Jesus Christ in such a church; as we have to suppose, that there were no godly persons remaining in Israel, when Elijah complained, that he was left alone. If there be no lawful refusing of sacramental communion, with a particular church, then there can be no lawful separation from it, till it be unchurched. But the latter is absurd; and therefore the former. I think, it is manifestly absurd to say, that we may not separate from a particular church, however degenerate and corrupt in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; till it is no church of Christ at all: for this would be to suppose, that, though Christ has provided the censures of the church as means of preserving her from the danger arising from the offences of one or a few members, he has provided no means of her preservation from the far greater danger of utter ruin by the prevailing influence of a corrupt majority. When such a majority is found incorrigibly obstinate in their opposition to any steps towards a thorough reformation, it is evident, that there is no remedy but secession. By such a majority, one great end of church communion, which is, that the truths and institutions of the Lord Jesus may be preserved pure and entire, is avowedly and obstinately opposed; and therefore, in this case, the Lord Jesus, is saying to his people, as in 2 Corinth. vi. 17, *Come out from*

* Plea, &c. pages 302, 303.

among them, and be ye separate. Many limit such calls to our departure from the communion of Pagans and Papists. But they are applicable to our secession from any prevailing party, even though they should bear the name of christians, of Protestants and Presbyterians, who, in their united capacity, or as a professing body, are going on in obstinate opposition to any of the truths and institutions of Jesus Christ; so that none can continue in their church communion, without being involved in the guilt of that opposition. From such combinations Christ is calling his people to separate.

It is not meant, however, that degenerate Protestants and Presbyterians are upon a level with Heathens and Papists; for there may be a just cause of separation from the former, though not so great as from the latter. A warrantable secession from a particular church of Christ, is a most serious and important step. It is the result of assiduity in searching the scriptures, of much prayer and fasting, of long struggling with a prevailing party, obstinate in a course of defection. When a warrantable secession has been made; and, while the ground of it continues, there is the highest moral necessity of adhering to it. The Lord Jesus is saying to those, who have taken such a step; Whatever profession or practice ye have attained of the truths and ordinances delivered in my word, *hold fast till I come:* and with respect to particular churches, that persist in the evils which have occasioned a necessary secession, his direction is plain, *Let them return unto you, but return ye not unto them.* But when we have sacramental communion with any church from which we have separated, we do return to them: for, in our act of communicating with any church, we declare our agreement with that church in its peculiar and distinguishing profession of the christian religion: we own the profession of that church to be right, and to be so in preference to every different and contrary profession. This is a direct contradiction of the profession we make in our separate communion. According to this scheme, we may, in our sacramental communion, one Sabbath profess, that all true believers shall certainly persevere in a state of grace unto the end; that the infants of church members ought to be baptised; that we have in the book of Psalms a system of psalmody sufficient for the exercise of singing in public worship; and that no hymns of human composure ought to be used in that exercise; or that the testimony, maintained by the Secession church, ought to be cordially embraced, as the testimony which Christ is calling his people to maintain at this day; and yet, on the very next Sabbath, we may, in our sacramental communion, profess directly contrary to our former profession, that true believers may fall away from their state of grace totally and finally; that infant baptism is no baptism; that the songs in the book of Psalms are not sufficient for the exercise of singing in public and solemn worship, various hymns of human composure being thought more proper to be sung in New Testament worship; or that adherence to what is called the Secession Testimony is unwarrantable. Must we thus say, *yea* and *nay;* must we *lie* and *prevaricate* with God and man, in order to avoid the charge of unchurching and excommunicating the churches, from which we are justly separated?

I cannot see, however, that we are under any such necessity. For it does not necessarily follow, from our declining the communion of a

particular church, that we deny its profession and practice to be so far good, as to entitle it to the name of a church of Christ. It is no less the end of our separation from several churches, that they may be recovered from their backsliding and preserved as churches of Christ, than that we ourselves may be preserved from the contagion of their errors. A religious society may be called a church of Christ, while it holds the scriptures to be the word of God, and Jesus Christ come in the flesh, to be the foundation. But the apostle in 1 Corinth. iii. 11, 15, shews us, that some who hold this foundation may build upon it, we know not how much, wood, hay and stubble, to their great loss. When we refuse, therefore, to have sacramental communion with corrupt churches, we refuse to join with them in the building of wood, hay, stubble, as dangerous to themselves, and as what would be so to us; but we do not, therefore, deny, that they build on the foundation; or that they are churches of Christ.

Nor have the advocates for catholic communion any good reason to call our declining sacramental communion with various corrupt churches an excommunication of these churches. Excommunication always implies the exercise of authority over the persons excommunicated; but declining sacramental communion implies no exercise of authority at all. Excommunication always respects persons, and proceeds upon a trial of personal conduct: hence it is unwarrantable to pretend, as the Papists do, to excommunicate whole churches or bodies of men. But this declining of sacramental communion proceeds not upon a judgement concerning the conduct of persons; but upon a judgement concerning the profession of religion made by a particular church. Besides, a church's suspending a person from sacramental communion is a degree of censure; but it cannot be called excommunication; and far less, can her act of merely declining that communion be so called. I cannot conceive what induces any to call a conscientious refusal to communicate with corrupt churches, an excommunication of these churches, unless it be, what is common to this with every other instance of the practice of godliness, that it necessarily condemns the contrary practice: just as Noah's awful regard to God's threatening to destroy the world by water, manifested by his preparing the ark, condemned the contempt, with which that threatening was treated by the ungodly generation among whom he lived.

Alex. Every church refusing to hold communion with another, does, by that fact, declare that she is too pure for such a communion, and that it would contaminate her in the eyes of her God, and bring down upon her the tokens of his displeasure. A church, that makes such pretensions, ought to be very sure of her own sanctity; very sure, that the mantle of her excluding-zeal does not cover offences against the Lord her God, quite as provoking as those which she charges upon others; that she does not wink at abuses in her own members, while she laments and reproaches her neighbours; and that there is no place for the Jewish proverb, *Physician, heal thyself.* This precaution is the more necessary; as the very assumption of a censorial power over her christian sisters invites the most unsparing scrutiny: and it is no honorable mark that is affixed by Truth itself, to those who, regardless

of their own faults, say, *Stand by thyself; come not near me; for I am holier than thou.**

Ruf. What you have advanced imports, that a particular church, in the case, you suppose, of her tolerating great evils in her own members, is not in a capacity for a consistent exercise of discipline in excluding the members of other churches for their errors and corruptions. But this does not prove your assertion, that it is not her duty to do so. A person is not freed from the obligation he is under to the moral duty of reproving the sins of others; though his being chargeable with the same or greater sins, without reformation, unfits him for the discharge of that duty. So a church's obligation to censure, whatever is contrary to her holy profession, any who apply to her for admission to her sealing ordinances, remains entire; however much her capacity for doing so, may be lessened by the inconsistent practice of her members. What you have now offered contains no argument for your scheme of catholic communion; but is only a bitter reflexion on any church that endeavours to bear a consistent and faithful testimony against that scheme, and to retain the scriptural reformation in doctrine and order which their forefathers handed down as the cause of God and truth. Depraved human nature, being the same in them as in others, produces the same deplorable effects. But, it is hoped, that the grace of God in Christ teaches them to study personal as well as public reformation. The criminal partiality alluded to in conniving at offences and abuses is directly contrary to their profession; and therefore the careful study of consistency with that profession must be the way to attain a thorough reformation from all such abuses and offences. The amendment of their lives is not to be promoted by imbibing lax principles with regard to church communion; but rather by a firm persuasion, that they can never adhere too closely to their scriptural profession, and to the holy order that Christ has appointed in his house.

With regard to the scriptural pride implied in the expression, *I am holier than thou*, I would ask, Whether does more of it appear in those who lament the coldness of their affections towards God, and towards his people, as bearing his image; and who ascribe their failure, not to any deficiency in the means appointed in the word of God; but to their own neglect, or misimprovement of these means? Or, does not as much, or more of it, appear in men's boasting of such enlarged affection to the saints of all denominations, as are miserably cramped by any other than latitudinarian sacramental communion?

I might also ask, Whether the appearance of seeking the praise of men, on account of personal piety, be greater in those, who ingratiate themselves with various societies, making contradictory professions of religion, by holding sacramental communion with them; or in those, who satisfy themselves with that church communion and dispensation of gospel ordinances, which they judge to be most agreeable to the word of God?

The distinguishing profession of the Novatians and Donatists of old, led them to value themselves upon their spiritual attainments; and to reckon themselves polluted by the personal sins, and particularly by the unregenerate state of their fellow communicants. The principle of the latitudinarian, which is now the fashionable scheme of church com-

* Plea, &c. page 391.

munion, is much the same. The principle, I mean, is, that we are to have sacramental communion with all that we judge to have real communion with Christ: and this rule plainly implies, that we are to have communion with no other. It is no rule, if it means, that we may have communion with such as we do not judge to have real communion with him. When any church admits persons to sacramental communion according to this scheme, she must consider them, and they are led, by her admission of them, to consider themselves as real saints. It is true, none ought to partake of the Lord's supper without faith, by which they are to feed on Christ: yet it does not follow, that none are to apply for sacramental communion with any church, till they have attained sensible assurance of their having actually believed, or of their being already in Christ: for, as this sacrament is appointed for the relief of weak and doubting christians; so persons, in this case, who bewail their unbelief, and labor to have their doubts resolved, who desire to be found in Christ, and to depart from all iniquity, may, and ought to come to the Lord's supper, that they may be farther strengthened. But when a church admits persons on the latitudinarian scheme, to partake of sealing ordinances, she must consider them as professing, that they have attained the sensible assurance before mentioned. Now, whether does such a profession as this, or that of only adhering to the confession of a particular church, and engaging to study a practice conformable to it, savour most of the proud boasting of one who says, Come not near me; for I am holier than thou? The truth is, men's spiritual pride and conceit of their own righteousness, are much fostered by an obstinate attachment to human devices in the worship of God. This was the case with the Pharisees, in our Saviour's time. Hence, he said unto them, *In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrine, the commandments of men.* But he no where ascribes any such tendency to our holding fast the scriptural profession which we have made, or to our refusing church communion with the avowed and obstinate opposers of any part of it. True humility and self-distrust, will make a person afraid to venture out of the straight path of duty in the smallest matter. The fear of the Lord, leads us to walk in *the midst* of the paths of judgement. The humble are always aware of the danger of temptation, and of their inability to resist it: they are, therefore, apprehensive of danger from the communion, and the artifices of the erroneous; while self-conceited and high-minded professors, consider any delicacy or caution, in this respect, as quite needless, or even ridiculous. You say, that by the fact of refusing to hold communion with a particular church, on account of her corruption, we pretend to be too pure for such communion. But it may be said more justly, to the practisers of latitudinarian communion, You reckon yourselves too pure to be in any danger from the infection of the public corruptions, which are acknowledged to prevail in various churches with which you propose to communicate.

§ 22. *Alex.* Such is the fastidiousness of certain churches, that the simple hearing of the gospel from the mouth of the most faithful minister, who happens not to be within their own circle, is an ecclesiastical crime, and a sufficient ground of church censure. And should such a minister be, on any occasion, admitted in ministerial communion to one of their pulpits, however honored he may be of God: I tremble to say

it;—blasphemy itself could hardly excite a greater ferment. It would be vain to deny the accuracy of this statement. It is the truth, the plain truth, and nothing but the truth. The facts which justify it, are notorious to the whole world.*

Ruf. In our professed inquiry after truth and duty, passionate expressions are of no use, unless it be to impose on the unwary, or such as are unwilling to be at the trouble of thinking for themselves. The hearing of the word preached, is a solemn ordinance of the Lord Christ; and it really concerns us to observe it in the right manner. The scripture certainly forbids us to hear teachers of error: *Cease my son*, says Solomon, *to hear the instruction which causes to err from the words of knowledge. If there come any unto you*, says the apostle John, *and bring not this doctrine*, that is, the doctrine of Christ, *receive him not into your house; neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.* What I understand by a teacher of error, is not one who may mistake the scope of a particular text; or who may often take what seems to be the least probable side in a doubtful question; or who may even hold an erroneous opinion, on a point not yet determined in the church's public profession; if he does not contend for his nostrum or peculiar opinion, to the prejudice of any article of the church's profession; nor to the disturbing of her peace: nay, though a minister, through infirmity or inadvertence, deliver something contrary to the truth, so professed and attained; yet, while he discovers no obstinate attachment to any such tenet, he is not to be denounced as a teacher of error. But one who not only delivers such error, as I have described, in his public discourses, but holds it as a part of his public profession, is justly accounted an erroneous teacher. The members of a church, adhering to Presbyterial church government, as an ordinance of the Lord Christ, should consider a minister as a teacher of error, who publicly professes, that Christ has committed the government of the church to diocesan bishops; or that he has appointed the community of the faithful to govern themselves in congregations; each of which is independent and unconnected, in order and discipline, with any other; or that Christ has appointed no particular form of church government at all: but has left it to be modelled by magistrates, or by ministers, or by the people themselves, according to the maxims of human prudence. The members of a church, adhering to the Westminster Confession of Faith, should hold a minister to be a teacher of error, who publicly professes, that there is no eternal decree of God, infallibly determining a certain number of fallen men to everlasting life; that Christ laid down his life for all the individuals of mankind; that unrenewed men have a natural ability to believe in Christ, to repent, or to yield any such obedience to the law as is pleasing to God; and that true believers may fall away from their gracious state, totally and finally. The members of the secession church, should hold a minister to be a teacher of error, who publicly professes any of the errors now mentioned; and also who, notwithstanding a professed adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, publicly professes any of the errors condemned in their declaration and testimony for the doctrine and order of the church of Christ. It is evident, that church members, in going to hear

* Plea, &c. pages 299, 300.

such ministers in the case now stated, go to hear, and, by their example, to countenance and encourage others in going to hear, what they themselves publicly acknowledge to be error, and to be another doctrine than the doctrine of Christ. It is hard to conceive, how any, who consider this subject with candour, can deny the justice of applying to the case now described, the passages already quoted, forbidding us to receive or hear teachers of error. Farther, it is to be considered, that there is church communion in hearing the word preached, as well as in receiving the Lord's supper. In the former, as well as in the latter, we make a joint profession of the christian religion: and that profession can be no other in either of these ordinances, than that of the church with which we join in observing them.* The same joint profession is made in prayer and praise. Thus, according to the practice of occasional communion, on one Sabbath, our profession of the christian religion is the same with that of those who adhere to the Westminster Confession and the Secession Testimony: but the next Sabbath, our profession is the same with that of another church; which is, in some respect, directly contrary to our former profession. Such contradictory professions are no more reconcileable to sound morality, than contradictory oaths.

Alex. Christians are commanded *to prove all things*;† and therefore, we should hear ministers of different persuasions, in order to judge for ourselves.

Ruf. The end for which we are to prove all things, particularly for which we should examine the various professions made of the christian religion, is, that we may espouse one of them, and hold it fast, as being truly good. Some pretend to be always proving, to be ever learning, without ever coming to the knowledge of the truth. While this is the case, they cannot sincerely embrace any profession of religion. But they that are in full communion with any particular church, profess, that they have found the truth; and that they now intend, through grace, to hold fast the profession of it: and therefore they cannot consistently, on pretence of seeking the truth, join in another communion, making a contradictory profession. A person's stedfastness in the profession of Divine truth, is confirmed by the daily exercises of searching the scriptures, of meditation, and fervent prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit; and not by following the teachers of different and opposite doctrines. It may be farther observed, that the hearing of one or a few sermons preached, by some ministers of a particular church, is not a sufficient ground to proceed upon, in forming a judgement of the

* When the evils of a particular church are such as do not render secession from her communion necessary, then, it is our duty to have communion with her in her public ordinances; a testimony being maintained against these evils in the way of communion with her. But when we are justly in a state of secession from a particular church, we cannot join in her public ordinances, without partaking of her sin: in the first place, because according to the import of our secession, we cannot maintain a faithful testimony against her evils in a way of communion with her: and, in the second place, because our communion with her, in her public ordinances, implies a choice of the profession according to which her ordinances are administered, as preferable to any different or opposite profession; and even to that which we make in our secession: for where there are different professions, it is evidently our duty to choose the purest; and to attend on that administration of Divine ordinances, which is according to the profession which we prefer. What is here meant, is no more than that our christian walk, should be according to our christain profession.

† 2 Thess. v. 21.

doctrine held by that church. For we may hear many of their sermons, in which none of the distinguishing tenets of their communion are candidly stated. Every religious society, called a church, has, or ought to have, a declaration of the doctrine, worship, and discipline, by which it is distinguished from other churches. By such a declaration, the sentiments of a society being known, we may compare them with the scripture, and judge for ourselves, how far they agree or disagree with that supreme standard. According to a judgement thus formed, we ought, or ought not, to have communion with a particular church, in her public ordinances. I may add, that the members of a particular church, cannot warrantably acknowledge any one as in the regular exercise of the ministerial office, before they receive and acknowledge him as in full church communion with them. For, in no well regulated society, is any person acknowledged as an officer, before he be fully received as a member. Nothing can be more preposterous, than pretending to hear one as a faithful minister, and yet to refuse to join in sacramental communion with him, on account of his public profession.

Alex. You cannot deny, that the ministers of other churches, though they disagree with you in some of the peculiarities of your profession of the faith, are ministers of Christ. He hath sent them to preach; and therefore you ought to hear them.

Ruf. Unless by the term *peculiarities*, you mean undoubted truths of God's word, you wander from the point in question. With regard to ministers whom Christ hath sent, I ought to hear them, if they adhere to their commission. But, if they openly avow their determination to teach what is certainly known to be contrary to their commission, I ought not to hear them. If they bring any other doctrine; if they cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and which ought to be held by the whole catholic church, we are to avoid them. Christ sent them to deliver his word faithfully: but if they are teachers of error, according to the description which has just now been given of those who ought to be accounted such, it is the duty of the church to censure them; and, if obstinate, to depose them. If the error, or disorder, in which a public teacher professedly and obstinately persists, be such as we would not hesitate to censure in a private member of the church, our overlooking such obstinacy in him, on account of a multitude being involved in the same evil, and on account of his eminent reputation, cannot be acquitted of that partiality and undue respect of persons, which the scripture condemns. It is too little considered by the occasional hearers of any minister, in whose public profession, (or in that of the church to which he belongs,) they own there are grievous errors; that, according to his profession, he must make the propagation of these errors one end of his public administrations; and that, however much truth he may declare, he must either shun to declare the whole truth, or contradict his own profession; both of which are criminal in a called and sent minister of Jesus Christ. In this view, his character, as a called and sent minister of Christ, greatly aggravates, instead of extenuating, his unfaithfulness. The Lord prohibited the people of Judah to hearken

to the words of the prophets, not only because they were not sent, but because they did not stand in, nor adhere to his counsel.*

§ 23. *Alex.* O Rufus, this catholic communion, and one year of love, will do more towards setting us mutually right, where we are wrong, than a millennium of wrangling.†

Ruf. Love to God, should regulate love to our brethren. They, who love God, must love the truths of his word, by which he reveals himself, not only as the God of nature, but as the God of grace: and they must love his ordinances, which bear the stamp of his authority, and diffuse the savour of his name. These truths and ordinances, so far as they are preserved pure and entire in the profession of a particular church, serve to advance the declarative glory of God; of which glory, the contrary errors tend to rob him: and therefore, love to God, must lead his people to delight in his truths and ordinances, and to be zealous against the contrary errors and corruptions; and against any toleration of them in his church. No injury that a true lover of God suffers in his worldly interest or reputation, gives him so much concern and sorrow, as men's opposition to the truths and institutions of Jesus Christ. How then can he be reconciled to a sacramental communion with those who, according to his own public profession, are obstinately persisting in an avowed opposition to any of them? *By this*, says the apostle John, *we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.* Hence, it is evident, that whatever is contrary to true love to God, is also contrary to true love to our brethren. Besides, true love to our brethren, requires us to suspend our intimate communion with them, whenever that communion tends to support and encourage them in what is sinful. It requires us to rebuke them for their sins: Lev. xix. 17, *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour: thou shalt not suffer sin upon him.* If love to the brethren requires the rebuking of a private offence, it must much more require the rebuking of a public one: for, in the former case, love to the offender himself requires it; but, in the latter, love to many others renders it necessary. If, after a rebuke, or a public testimony of the truth against his sin, he continues obstinate; love to our brethren must then prompt us, while this is the case, to decline communion with him: and, on supposition that many persons, and even many churches, are involved in the same offence, love to the brethren, as well as to God, will direct us to the same line of conduct.

Alex. If you rebuke those whom you call erroneous, they will rebuke you; and there will be wrangling without end. Catholic communion, on the contrary, breathes nothing but love.

Ruf. In any case, wherein the word of God directs us to rebuke our brother, we are by no means to neglect it, from an apprehension, that it will be opposed. The duty of being valiant for the truth, implies men's opposition to it. If, by wrangling, you mean the wrath of man, and other irregular passions, that men discover in disputes about religion; it is, no doubt, to be condemned, and guarded against with the utmost vigilance. But if, under the notion of wrangling, you should proscribe all endeavours to point out the evil of the erroneous opinions and corrupt practices, by which our fellow church members are in

* Jerem. xxiii. 22. † Plea, &c. page 347.

danger of being seduced from any part of their christian profession, I cannot help thinking, that you would only give a reproachful name to a duty abundantly warranted by the precepts and examples of scripture. Is it not the duty of ministers, not only to exhort, but to convince gainsayers? Did not the true prophets constantly testify against those who saw false burdens and causes of banishment? Did not Christ, in his sermon on the mount, and through his whole personal ministry, set himself to confute the errors which then prevailed among the Jews? Every good commentator allows, that the epistles of the New Testament cannot be well understood without attending to the errors, which are therein alluded to and refuted.

It is too evident to be denied, that sacramental communion with those who offend their brethren and sin against God by an erroneous profession, or a superstitious form of public worship, is in direct opposition to the scriptural way of expressing love to such offenders by rebuking them, and not suffering sin upon them. Faithful are the wounds of a church, that is honestly and impartially adhering to a scriptural profession; for every one knows what he has to expect from such a church. But the kisses of catholic communion are most deceitful; because it cannot be known, according to the account, which the followers of this scheme give of it, how far they adhere to any determinate religious profession, either of the church of which they are called members, or of any other church, with which they communicate. They talk, indeed, of adhering to the essentials; but then they themselves confess, that they cannot determine with precision what these essentials are. This scheme of catholic communion is for embalming and preserving manifold devisions and offences, which tend to the ruin of the church of Christ; for it prohibits the use of several remedies against them, of Christ's appointment; such as, withdrawing from those who cause them, or inflicting on them the censures of the church. They, who wilfully neglect these means, have little or no ground to expect, that the Lord Christ will afford relief by other means of their own devising.

Alex. By joining with a church in sacramental communion, you will get an access to her confidence, which will be denied you, while you decline her communion. Acknowledge and commend her excellencies, and you may speak to her freely, and perhaps effectually, of her deficiencies. The system of declining communion with a church, for errors and corruptions not essential, never did any good yet.*

Ruf. I own, I am far from thinking, that a sacramental communion with a church, that opposes any part of our scriptural profession of the faith, tends to reconcile her to that profession. On the contrary; the prejudice of her members against our profession will be increased, when they see us acting, as if their opposition to it, were no offence to us. Such conduct naturally leads them to conclude, that we ourselves do not sincerely believe the articles of our public profession which they oppose, or, what often comes to much the same thing, that we reckon them to be of no great importance. Yes, Alexander, in order to have peace with other churches, let us acknowledge their excellencies; let us sacrifice to so valuable an end, our worldly interests, honors, and pleasures; and also, our own opinions, feelings, and

* Plea, &c. pages 345, 347.

habits; but not one jot or tittle of that scriptural profession, which we have embraced; that sacred depositum, or trust, which the Lord Christ hath committed to us: particularly, let us not go to the Lord's table in order to tell the church and the world, that we make so little account of that holy profession which we have solemnly espoused, and which, as yet, we see no cause to retract, that we reckon the most open and obstinate opposition to various articles of it, no such offence as renders reconciliation with the offender any way necessary in order to sacramental communion. You say, that declining from the communion of a church, on account of errors and corruptions not essential, never did any good: do you mean, that people do as well, when they go along with persons or churches in their errors and corruptions, as when they refuse to do so; though it is evident, that, in such refusal, they obey the Divine admonition; *If sinners entice thee, consent thou not?* Do you suppose, that the people of Judah's declining communion with the church of the ten separated tribes, did no good, while the errors and corruptions of these tribes, were not so essential, as to unchurch them, or to render it impossible for any of God's people to remain in the pale of their church? Did the retiring of the Leonists to the valleys of Piedmont, long before the height of Antichrist's reign, do no good? Did the conduct of our forefathers, in declining the communion of the Episcopal church, do no good?

Alex. It has been said, that, while you invite the friends of Christ to his table, not one in ten thousand of them that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and endeavour to walk, as he walked, comes within your scope; for all your descriptions of Christians are only for christians of your own sect.*

Ruf. This accusation proceeds upon a supposition which has been already considered, namely, that it is unwarrantable for a particular church in any case to refuse real christians a seat at the Lord's table. We have seen, that this supposition is not universally true. You represent such refusal as inconsistent with the invitation that is given to the friends of Christ to come to his table. But, as has been observed already, that invitation directs them to come according to the due order. One thing belonging to that order is the removal of offences. Our Lord's direction is plain. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember, that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar; and then come and offer thy gift.*† If the observation of this rule be necessary in the case of private or personal offences; it cannot be less but more so in the case of such as are public, the evil of which is greater. Nor may a particular church dispense with the observation of this order on account of the apparent piety or great multitude of the offenders. She is to be faithful; she is to do nothing in partiality. The ministers of a particular church, however, are under no temptation, from their steadfast adherence to a scriptural profession, to give such descriptions of christians, as are applicable to none but those with whom they have sacramental communion: first, because the description of a true christian is not limited to what comes under the cognisance of the visible church; but includes the heart: and, secondly, because the real christian, while in the present militant state, is to be described as imperfect; and therefore lia-

* Plea, &c. page 374. † Math. v. 23, 24.

ble to such failures and offences as are ground of church censure. With regard to the reproachful name of sect, it ought not to be given to a particular church on account of a public profession, which has nothing but what is agreeable to the word of God, and what ought to be held by the whole catholic church.

§ 24. *Alex.* The author, whose opinion I have represented as my own in this and former conversations, observes, that the opposers of catholic communion seem to be accurate disputants on the heads of sectarian collision. Their party-soul is narrowed down: all its perceptions are directed to those things that put christians asunder, instead of those things which should bring them together; and which, for their importance, may not, without degradation, be named in company with the causes of their disunion. With one party, the watch-word is our *excellent*, our *apostolical church*; with another, the *mode of baptism*; with a third, the *solemn league and covenant*; with a fourth, the *burgess oath*; with a fifth, *psalmody*.*

Ruf. With regard to the remark about the particular attention some persons pay to the causes of the differences among christians, I observe, that, like many other things in human conduct, it will bear either a favourable or an unfavourable construction. That which this author puts upon the endeavours, that some have used to point out the causes of religious differences, is most uncharitable: for he supposes their design is no other than the infernal one of continuing and increasing those differences, and of rendering all other churches, besides their own, as odious as possible. Might he not have allowed, that some have been influenced in speaking and writing concerning the causes of these differences by a sincere desire of contributing to the removal of them? This is the more probable, if they were in any degree, as he says, they seem to be, accurate disputants. Does not common sense lead men to make some enquiry into the causes of a difference between private persons, as often a necessary means of removing it? and may not the love of Divine truth prompt one to refute small errors, (if any errors in matters of religion may be so called) as well as great? We may not always conclude, that it is unnecessary, or blameable, to refute the error of a person or people, because the truths they hold, are more numerous and important, than those which they deny. The scripture, sometimes represents the danger of one evil as very great. *He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all.*† *Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.*‡ Hence, if there were but one thing in the profession of a particular church, contrary to the word of God, those who discern the evil ought faithfully to warn her of it: and such as endeavour to discharge this duty, are more friendly to such a church, than those, who, by flattery, encourage her to hold fast her idol. Some critics are justly recommended for their method of teaching us to understand the rules of good writing, by pointing out the faults of the most celebrated authors. So, instead of being reproached as doing hurt, they ought to be considered as rendering a service to any particular church, who candidly warn her of any deviation from God's word in her profession, or avowed practice. With regard to the *watch-words* you mentioned, it might have been

* Plea, &c. page 376. † James ii. 10. ‡ Math. v. 19.

added, with a sixth party, the *watch-word* is *occasional catholic communion*, or local peculiarities. But one should think, there would be more philanthropy in any serious endeavour to shew men the good or evil of one or two such objects of public attention, than in such a derisive enumeration of them, insinuating, that they are all much alike. I can scarcely forbear adding one remark, which is, that a minister of the Presbyterian denomination might have spared the Solemn League and Covenant; the declared object of which was the reformation of religion in Britain and Ireland, according to the word of God and the example of the best reformed churches; the same reformation which is described in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the larger and shorter catechisms. It is a pity to see a Presbyterian minister publicly countenancing that malignant generation, who, from the celebrated Hudibras down to Dobbin in the tavern, have made the Solemn League and Covenant the subject of their profane banter and ridicule. But, indeed, the nature and design of that engagement was quite contrary to the scheme of catholic communion, defended by the author of the passage you have recited. The object of that oath was the nearest conjunction and uniformity of the church of Christ in doctrine, worship, and government; whereas the catholic communion, for which this author strenuously contends, implies the church's toleration of multiformity in all these respects.

Alex. This author represents a zealous member of a nameless judicatory, contending for a testimony, over and above the recognised confession of faith, as saying, *What difference will there be between you and the General Assembly, if you have not a testimony.**

Ruf. The propriety or impropriety of such a saying would be better understood, if we knew the occasion, on which it was uttered. It is probable, that the person was speaking of some body of people professing adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and yet considering themselves as having a separate communion from the general assembly professing adherence to the same confession. Supposing a person to be either a stranger to the history of the two bodies, or to be desiring their union; one should think, he might be naturally led to ask, what declaration, had been given, of the reason of the difference between them? Perhaps he meant no more than to say, that there ought to be no division, or at least that it should not be continued, if there was no declared reason for it. If this was all, it was no more than a dictate of common sense; which should have offended no body; and least of all, those who affect to distinguish themselves by their zeal for the union of the churches.

Alex. This author insists, that sectarian communion is a practical rejection of the unity of the church at large; and breaks up the charity which ought to subsist between all the members of the body of Christ. Sectarian zeal, he says, chills the warmth of the catholic charity; tends to expel from the churches a sense of their common interest; makes them withhold that support which they ought to afford one another; hinders them from co-operating together in promoting the kingdom of God; and puts into the mouth of the infidel that bitter taunt; *These christians have just religion enough to hate one another heartily.*†

* Plea, &c. page 375. † Id. pages 331, 332. &c.

Ruf. The term sectarian, the favourite watch-word of this author, tends to divert the attention from the matter in dispute. The question is, whether a church's refusing to have sacramental communion with such as openly avow their opposition to one or more articles of her scriptural profession has such effects as are now mentioned? Does this refusal break up the unity of the church at large? By no means. The truths of God's word constitute the bond of unity in the catholic church; so far as they are publicly professed and preserved in the doctrine, worship, and government of the several particular churches. Hence it is evident, that what breaks up the peace of the catholic church, is not the faithfulness of particular churches in refusing, but their laxness in granting sacramental communion to the avowed opposers of undoubted truths of God's word, as exhibited in the public profession of any of the churches, every instance of this laxness tends to weaken the bond of their union. Does refusing sacramental communion with the avowed opposers of the truths of God, publicly professed by a particular church, chill the warmth of love to the catholic church? surely no: for it is manifestly the interest of the catholic church that every particular church should hold these truths in her public profession, and not tolerate opposition to them in her communion. Hence it must give sincere pleasure to a lover of the catholic church to see a particular church uniformly faithful in refusing church communion to open opposers of any one of the truths of God contained in her public profession; as it would give pleasure to the patriotic citizen of the United States, to see a particular state refusing to harbour any avowed enemy to the true interest of all the states. Does the faithfulness of a particular church, in refusing to have sacramental communion with the open opposers of any article of her scriptural profession, hinder her from using any means appointed in the word of God for promoting his spiritual kingdom? This is so far from being the case, that this refusal is supposed and implied in the use of several proper means for that end; such as, a church's contending for the whole truth exhibited in her public profession; the judicial assertion of the truths of God's word, and the judicial condemnation of the contrary errors; committing the word to faithful men, who will teach others the whole truth and nothing but the truth, according to the public profession or testimony of the church, in due subordination to the holy scriptures; recognising the solemn engagements, which the church has come under to preserve whatever measure of reformation has been attained. These means, which are certainly appointed in the word of God, cannot be sincerely used by any particular church, unless she be careful, that such as are avowed and obstinate opposers of any article of her scriptural profession, may not be received into, or continued in her communion. Whilst these means, of our Lord's appointment, are wilfully neglected, we have little ground to expect the Divine blessing on such other means as men may pretend, to use for the advancement of his spiritual kingdom.

With regard to the sarcasm of the infidels, it cannot be of much authority in determining what is right or wrong in the matter of church communion; since they are, no competent judges, either of the different persuasions of professing christians; or of the scriptural ways in which they ought to express their love to one another. It is only in-

consistencies in the conduct of christians with their public profession, that gives the infidels an advantage against them. Among which inconsistencies I cannot help ranking the sacramental communion which your author defends. A late historian of modern Europe, having observed, that, in consequence of the union between the two kingdoms of England and Scotland in the reign of Queen Anne, the Scots agreed, that the members whom they were to send to the British parliament, should receive the sacrament according to the rules of the church of England, censures the meanness and inconsistency of such a compliance.*

Alex. It is necessary to conclude our conversation at present, our attention being called to other engagements.

§ 25. *Ruf.* Before we part, permit me to express in few words the result of our conversation on this scheme of catholic, or rather latitudinarian communion.

In the first place, it is a sectarian communion. Its existence supposes that there are sects and parties in the catholic church; and that the variety of men's opinions, habits and feelings, is sufficient to justify the continuance of them. Scriptural sacramental communion admits of no sects; requiring all the partakers of it to be one bread, one body; perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement.

In the second place, it is an unfaithful and dishonest scheme. It is unfaithful to the Lord Jesus; for under the pretext of expressing love to him at his table, it regards the denial of some of his truths or institutions, however openly and obstinately persisted in, as a trivial matter, deserving no church-censure. When the advocates for this scheme represent the truths and institutions of Christ, that are publicly opposed by corrupt churches as sectarian and local peculiarities, they are chargeable with great unfaithfulness to the Lord Christ, to these churches and to the whole catholic church. They are chargeable with attempting to heal the wound of God's people slightly, saying, peace, peace, while there is no peace.

Thirdly, it is a backsliding scheme. There is nothing more incumbent on a particular church than steadfastness in maintaining all the articles of Divine truth stated in her confession and testimony. But as soon as the practice obtains in any particular church of having sacramental communion with the open and obstinate opposers of any of these articles, that church thereby, falls from her steadfastness, and is chargeable in some measure with apostacy.

Alex. The declension of a particular church may be only such as consists with holding the head. What she declines to contend for, may be a non-essential, which ought not to hinder sacramental communion.

Ruf. But is it sufficient, that a church and her members hold the head? An inspired apostle tells us, that it is not; it is also necessary, that the whole body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, should increase with the increase of God. Christ is saying to each particular church, ***Hold fast that which thou hast: let no man take thy crown:*** be on thy guard against such as would seduce thee from thy steadfastness, which is thy crown, thy

* See Russel's History of Modern Europe.

true honour. A particular church is bound to hold fast, not only the essentials, but all things belonging to that conformity to the word of God, which she has attained.

Fourthly, it is a selfish scheme: as it directs men, in their church capacity, to hold the truths and duties exhibited in their public profession and testimony, according as they are judged to be necessary to their own salvation; while the denial of other truths and duties, according to this scheme, exposes to no church censure; however evidently those other truths and duties bear the stamp of God's authority, and tend to promote his declarative glory. So that *self*, under the name of what is necessary to salvation, seems to be the principle, rule and end of this latitudinarian scheme of sacramental communion.

Fifthly, it is a Deistical scheme. Deism *denies*, that the evil of error in religion, lies in its opposition to the authority of God, speaking in his word. But, that this evil is greatly extenuated, if not denied, by the latitudinarian scheme of sacramental communion, must be evident to every serious enquirer. For, first, there are many errors or tenets acknowledged to be contrary to the word of God, which this scheme does not allow to be censurable; or, however obstinately persisted in, to be any bar in the way of sacramental communion; such errors being thus supposed to have little or no evil in them; though they have the first and radical evil that is in any error in matters of religion. Secondly, according to this scheme, the profession of so many truths as are judged essential to men's salvation, is a sufficient warrant for sacramental communion with any church and her members; notwithstanding their obstinate attachment to ever so many errors in opposition to other truths: as if there were no evil in error, as it is contrary to the word of God, but only as it is contrary to utility. This is just the scheme of the Deists; who pretend to hold such things as they find in the Bible to be true and useful; allowing, at the same time, no more authority to the Bible, than to any human composition. The very supposition, that there are some truths in the scriptures, the open denial of which, deserves no church censure, is inconsistent with the reverence due to these sacred writings.

Sixthly, it is an impious scheme. It is so, as it tends to diminish the impression in men's minds, of the obligation they are under from God's authority, to receive and maintain all the doctrines and duties taught in his word; while it represents some of them as of so little importance, that church members may despise and reject them in the most open and obstinate manner, without being liable to any church censure. It is so, as it justifies and approves a dissimulation far more culpable than that for which Paul withstood Peter to the face: because, in that respect, he walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. In fine, this scheme is contrary to the power of godliness, as it is an unfaithful, backsliding, selfish and Deistical scheme. How importunate ought christians to be in prayer, for the church's deliverance from such a fatal wasting plague?

Alex. I have many examples of catholic communion to produce from the history of the primitive and of the reformed churches. These may be the subject of our next conversation.

Ruf. I have no objection to this proposal. I hope, then, my friend, you will soon favour me with your company at my house, where there

is a collection of books, which will be of use to us in examining these examples.

Alex. I will be with you, if the Lord will, within a few days.

Ruf. May HE direct us to inquire after the truth in his fear, with a due regard to his word as our only rule, and to his glory as our chief end. And, in this inquiry, may we be led to make a proper use of the footsteps of the flock, and to ask for the old paths, saying, Where is the good way, that we may walk therein?

DIALOGUE V.

The adoption of this scheme of catholic communion by the whole church, in any period, incredible.....What sort of instances are not to be admitted as examples of this catholic communion.....No approved practice of such communion in the time of the apostles..... Nor for some centuries after their decease shewn; first, from the designation of the truths which communicants professed to receive; secondly, from the exclusion of some from sacramental communion who were esteemed as true christians; thirdly, from the authority of the decrees of councils in the primitive church; fourthly, from the uniformity of public profession in the primitive church.....The practice of this catholic communion not proved by the different usages that obtained in the ancient churches..... Whether it was the sense of the ancients, that separation from a particular church, holding the essentials, is always separation from the catholic church.....Whether the Fathers condemned the Novatians and Donatists simply on account of their separation from the churches of Rome and Africa.....Errors of the Donatists.....The principles and reasoning of these sects very different from those of many who now oppose the modern scheme of catholic communion.....Whether it was the judgement of the Fathers, that by the very fact of separation from the churches of Rome and Africa, the Novatians and Donatists cast themselves out of the catholic church.....Whether the different opinions expressed by the Fathers concerning church government, proves that they practised the catholic communion in question.....The practice of those witnesses who separated from the church of Rome, contrary to this catholic communion.....The case of God's people who continued within the pale of the church of Rome, no example of this catholic communion.

ALEXANDER having come according to his promise, found Rufus in his study. Alexander observed, that here was a considerable library. Good books, says he, are legacies which our ancestors have left us. They are more valuable than mines of gold. Some contain useful discoveries that had been made in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. Some explain the laws that regulate civil society, and secure the equal rights of citizens. Some, which treat of being, in general, point out the various classes of it, and delineate particularly the operations of the human mind. Some teach us how to write correctly and elegantly, and how to interpret the writings of others. Of the sort last mentioned, the more valuable are those which assist us in the interpretation of the holy scriptures.

Ruf. We are greatly indebted to those who have written commentaries on the books of the scriptures; and also to those who have com-

posed systems, exhibiting the close and beautiful connexion which revealed truths have with one another, and directing us to particular places of scripture, in which they are evidently taught. The Confession and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly, throw more light on the scriptures, than many commentaries. The history, too, of the affairs of the church, since the canon of scripture was closed, are of great use; as they shew how the special providence of God has been exercised about her, according to the prophecies and promises of the scripture; and how the truths and institutions of Christ, have been preserved in her profession and practice, notwithstanding continual opposition.

Alex. Your last observation, reminds me of the proposal which we agreed to, at the close of our former conversation; to consider the passages in the history of the church, which have been insisted on as examples of catholic communion; particularly by the author of a Plea, lately published, for that communion.

§ 26. *Ruf.* There is no other ground, on which we can safely rest as our warrant for believing any doctrine or practice to be of God, but his own word. In this word, we have not found any command or example countenancing this lax scheme of church communion. Observe the charge, which the Lord gave the prophet Ezekiel: *Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern: and if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof; and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the law of the house: Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.** This enumeration plainly implies, that God's professing people, ought to be ashamed of any want of conformity to the law of the house, even in matters that may seem to be of less importance. They ought to be ashamed of omitting even the tythe of mint, annise and cummin, when God requires it, as well as of omitting the weightier matters of judgement, mercy and truth. And if the church ought to be ashamed of such an omission, she ought to account it censurable in her members.

But, according to the scheme of catholic communion, a particular church is bound to admit to sacramental communion, without any censure, those who avow the most obstinate opposition to the scriptural profession which she has attained; provided only that the parts of her profession which they oppose, however plainly contained in the scripture, be non-essentials. It will be strange, if a scheme so contrary to scripture, should be found to have been adopted and maintained by the whole church of God, in any period.

§ 27. Instances have been produced as examples of this lax communion, which ought by no means to be admitted as such. Thus instances of the church's use of creeds, consisting of doctrines that are called essential, are no examples of this lax communion; while it does not appear, that the profession which the primitive church required of her members, was limited to what was literally expressed in these creeds; and while these creeds themselves serve to shew the care of

* Ezek. xliii. 10, 11, 12.

the church to exclude the erroneous from her communion; the terms used in them being allowed to have been directly opposite to the terms in which the erroneous expressed their opinions. In the second place, instances of sacramental communion between churches having various usages, which may be justly considered as indifferent, and not contrary to the scriptural profession and testimony maintained by either of these churches, are no examples of this lax communion. In short, instances of one church having sacramental communion with another, while there is nothing in the profession of the one opposite to the scriptural profession of the other, cannot be admitted as examples of the catholic communion in question.

§ 28. *Alex.* Was not catholic communion practised in the times of the apostles, or soon after?

Ruf. We have already considered several passages in the Acts of the Apostles, which have been proposed as examples of this pretended catholic communion; and have found them nothing to the purpose. The truth is, this scheme of communion could have no place in the times of the apostles; because there was then no difference among the churches in respect of their profession of the faith. Every church, planted by the apostles or evangelists, professed adherence to their whole doctrine, and to no other. Hence, while the profession of all the churches was the same, one church's admission of the members of another church, to her sacramental communion, could never imply the admission of an open and obstinate opposer of any one article of her scriptural profession. There were disorders and offences in the first christian churches, as well as in the churches at present; but there is no evidence, that the constitution of any of these churches tolerated, in their communion, the rejection of a single article of the doctrine, worship or discipline delivered by the apostles.

§ 29. It seems to have been the sense of the catholic church, for at least two centuries after the decease of the apostles, that no avowed opposer of any one article, essential or non-essential, of the doctrine of the apostles, ought to be admitted to sacramental communion. Of this we may be satisfied by observing some things, that are obvious in the history of the church in the second and third centuries, and even in some measure in the fourth and fifth.

The first thing I observe, is, that the fathers in that period still called the doctrine, which all the faithful members of the church were to hold, the doctrine or the truth taught by the apostles and their successors in the ministry; and these fathers also represented another or different doctrine, held by any, as a sufficient ground of *withdrawing from them.* "Let the children," says Clemens Romanus, "be bred "up in the institutions of Christ. All these things must be confirmed "by the faith that is in Christ. It will behoove us, that we do all "things in order, whatsoever our Lord has commanded us to do."* "Let us serve in fear," says Ignatius, "and with all reverence, as both "himself hath commanded; and, as the apostles, who preached the "gospel to us, and the prophets, who foretold the coming of the Lord, "have taught us, being zealous of what is good; abstaining from all "offences, and from false brethren."† "I have heard of some who

* Clemens' Epistle to the Corinthians, Sect. 21, 22, 40.

† Ignatius' Epistle to the Philippians, Sect. 6.

"have passed by you, having perverse doctrine; whom ye did not "suffer to sow among you."* "Study to be confirmed in the doc-"trine of our Lord and his apostles; that so whatsoever ye do, ye may "prosper."† "I exhort you, or rather not I, but the love of Jesus "Christ, that ye use none but christian nourishment, abstaining from "pasture, which is of another kind, I mean heresy;—namely, that of "those who confound together the doctrine of Jesus Christ with their "own poison; while they seem worthy of belief; or even give a deadly "potion mixed with sweet wine; so that he, who is ignorant of it, "does with treacherous pleasure, drink in his own death. Wherefore, "guard yourselves against such persons. And you will do so, if you "are not puffed up, but continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our "God, and from your bishops, and from the commands of the apos-"tles."‡ "Let not those who seem worthy of credit, and yet teach "other doctrines, disturb thee. Stand firm and immoveable, as an "anvil, when it is beaten upon."‖ The epistle of Barnabas exhorts the christian in these words: "Thou shalt love, as the apple of thine "eye, every one that speaketh unto thee the word of the Lord."§ "No man," says Justin Martyr, "is admitted to the food we call the "Eucharist, but he only that believeth the worth of our doctrine."¶ "We must withdraw," says Irenæus, "from the Presbyters who serve "their lusts and have not the fear of God in their hearts;—but we "must adhere to those who keep the doctrine of the apostles; and "with the order of the Presbytery show sound speech and a blameless "conversation."*

Alex. What do you mean, Rufus, by adducing these passages. I hope, you do not think, that the advocates for catholic communion are against our adhering to the doctrine of the apostles.

Ruf. What I mean to infer from these passages, is, that the primitive christians, in speaking of those from whom church members were to withdraw, or with whom they were not to join in sacramental communion, did not distinguish between the essential and the non-essential parts of the apostolic doctrine; and that there seems to be no ground to think, that they would have joined in communion with an obstinate and avowed opposer of what they knew and acknowledged to be an article of that doctrine.

Alex. The primitive church, from the days of the apostles to the close of the fourth century, in the exposition of her faith, as a rallying point of union, confined herself to a few great principles,—principles, which are, every where and at all times, vital to the religion of Jesus,—and without which it is impossible, there should be either christianity or christians. Nothing can be more simple, or summed up with more studious brevity, than the early creeds, or, as they were called, *the symbols of the faith:* Such is that familiarly known by the name of *The Apostles' Creed;* and that in Irenæus against various heresies, in the following terms: "The church, although scattered over the whole "world, even to the extremities of the earth, has received from the

* Ignat. Epist. to the Eph. Sect. 9. † Ignat. Epist. to the Magnes. Sect. 13.

‡ Ignat. Epist. to the Trall. Sect. 6. 7. ‖ Ignat. Epist. to Polycarp.

§ Barnabas' Epist. Sect. 19. ¶ Just. Mart. 2 Apol.

* Iren. adversus Hæreses, lib. iv. cap. 44.

"apostles and their disciples, the faith, viz. one *God the Father*, Al-
"mighty, that made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all
"things therein; and *one Christ Jesus*, the Son of God, who became
"incarnate for our salvation; and *one Holy Spirit*, who, by the holy
"prophets, preached the dispensations, and the advents, and the gene-
"ration from a virgin, and the suffering, and the resurrection from the
"dead, and the assumption, in flesh, into heaven, of our beloved Lord
"Jesus Christ; and his coming again from the heaven in the glory of
"the Father, to sum up all things, and raise all flesh of all mankind;
"that to Christ Jesus our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King,
"according to the good pleasure of his Father who is invisible, every
"knee may bow, of beings in heaven, on earth, and under the earth;
"and every tongue may confess to him; and that he may exercise
"righteous judgement upon all,—sending the ungodly into eternal
"fire;—but bestowing on the righteous and holy, incorruption, and the
"possession of eternal glory." It is clear, that this venerable father meant here to state substantially those high and leading truths which formed the doctrinal bond of their union.*

Ruf. I have already observed, that the church's use of such creeds is nothing to your purpose; while, as has been shewn by various expositors of the Apostles' Creed, the reason of the selection of the particular articles, stated in these creeds, was their direct and express opposition to the errors, which prevailed at the time when they were composed; a circumstance which rendered the church's requiring an assent to them a proper mean of excluding such, as adhered to these errors, from sacramental communion. The summary of the faith, given by Irenæus, suited the design of his treatise; which was to state some of the leading principles of the christian religion, which were manifestly opposite to the errors which he enumerates. But it can do nothing to prove, that the primitive church used what is now called catholic communion. For if we suppose it to be meant, that these creeds were the only bond of union in such a manner, that persons were admitted to sacramental communion, who assented to the words, though they openly denied many truths of God's word, that were only implied, or not expressed, in the words of these creeds; it would prove too much for your purpose; I mean more than, I suppose, you would grant: for then it would prove, that the primitive church admitted persons, who openly denied the proper satisfaction of Christ in the stead of his people, the duty of partaking of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, and a multitude of other truths, which are not expressly mentioned in the creeds to which you refer. On the other hand, if the bond of union, as to doctrine in the primitive church, included not only the truths literally expressed in these creeds, but also other truths that were implied, and such as are not mentioned in them; then the communicants of the primitive church must be considered as assenting to these other truths; and the avowed and obstinate denial of them, as well as of those literally mentioned in these creeds, must have been a ground of exclusion from sacramental communion. And, indeed, to suppose, that the primitive church dispensed with the faith and profession of the doctrines or commands of Christ's word, not expressly mentioned in these creeds; or that she did not

* Plea for Catholic Sacramental Communion, pages 38, 39, 40, 42.

censure the open and obstinate denial of such doctrines and commands, is a supposition not only groundless, but reproachful to the primitive church; as if she had not so much as aimed at a faithful adherence to the whole word of Christ, or as if there had been some of his words, the denial of which, even in the most open and obstinate manner, gave her little or no offence.

Alex. As heresies, corrupting any cardinal principle of christianity, arose in the church, her public profession met them by an open and decisive assertion of the injured truth. This necessarily enlarged, by degrees, the number of articles in her creed, as well as the scope of her ministerial instruction. But the basis of her communion was laid so broad, that all, who held the Head, might join in the enjoyment of christian privileges.*

Ruf. The church's creed, as contained in the writings of the apostles and prophets, may be justly said to have been always the same; it was never altered: the enlargement of it was only its application to the new appearance of prevailing error. But such new application shewed, that the basis of the church's communion was not so narrow; nor so limited to a few general terms, as your catholic scheme supposes; and that it excluded from sacramental communion an obstinate opposer of any of the doctrines of the apostles, even though they were not expressly mentioned in what is called the apostles', or in Irenæus' creed. The reason of the condemnation of errors by the primitive church, was not merely because they were contrary to some cardinal doctrines, but because they were contrary to any of the doctrines taught by the apostles, as has been shewn.

Alex. The ancient church never launched out into wide discussion; never pursued principles to their remote consequences; nor embarrassed her testimony by numerous and minute applications.†

Ruf. There were two things, which the ancient church, before the grand papal apostacy, aimed at in stating her testimony: one was, that it should be pure or exactly conformable, in every article, to the word of God. Hence the church, in those days, studied to mark with precision the differences between truth and error, and to guard against extremes. Thus, while she asserted the scriptural distinction of the persons in the Godhead against Praxeas and Sabellius, she also maintained the numerical unity of the Divine essence in the three persons against Arius and Macedonius: She held both the distinction of the natures in the person of Christ against Nestorius, and also the unity of his person against Eutyches. This could not be done without discussion and the accurate deducing of consequences. The other thing, which the ancient church aimed at, was to render her creed, or public profession, more and more perfect as to its extent and particularity. She enlarged, as you yourself have just now observed, her statement of the articles of her creed. She endeavoured to go on toward perfection in this matter. It was not the policy of the church of Christ, in her purer times, to conceal the errors held by some in her communion by stating her profession in general and ambiguous terms.

Alex. The creed of the primitive church contained her terms of communion. Consequently agreement in opinions, about which christians might differ, without impugning any of these doctrines, made no

* Plea, &c. pages 42, 43. † Id. page 42.

part of these terms. She did not consider such differences as violating her unity. And how numerous they were, no one needs be told, who has looked into her history.*

Ruf. We have seen, that the creed of the primitive church was never limited to the points literally mentioned in the apostles' and Irenæus' creeds. While christians considered all the doctrines of the apostles as belonging to the bond of the church's union, they must have reckoned the unity of the church to be violated or impaired by the open denial of any one of these doctrines. I know, there were numerous differences and disputes in the primitive church; yet it would be difficult to produce an instance of any that were admitted to sacramental communion, in the period of which I now speak, who avowed the rejection of what the church in her public profession justly acknowledged to be a doctrine of the apostles. Anicetus at Rome admitted Polycarp to sacramental communion, notwithstanding a difference between them about the observation of Easter. But, in this instance, what was denied by Polycarp was no doctrine of the apostles: for, as the historian Socrates observes, neither Christ nor his apostles had delivered any command about it. Various rites of human invention, such as the use of oil, of milk, and honey in the administration of baptism and the mixing of the wine in the Lord's supper with water, were insensibly introduced in some parts of the church. But, while no explicit testimony was given in the profession of any particular church against those rites as corruptions of the instituted worship of God, and as contrary to the doctrine of the apostles, the sacramental communion between churches that used them, and those that omitted them, was no example of the catholic communion which is now under consideration. The church's suffering these innovations to pass without notice was an evidence of a general decline in some degree from her primitive purity and vigilance. But in this case there was no example of sacramental communion, like that of the scheme in question, between any publicly and obstinately denying a part, supposed to be not essential, of the doctrine of the apostles, and those who professed adherence to that as well as other parts of their doctrine.

But it is time to proceed to a second observation, which is, that the primitive church sometimes excluded from their communion such as they had ground, according to a judgement of charity, to consider as real christians. They certainly regarded Tertullian in this light; for whom Cyprian had such an esteem, that, when he called for any of his writings, he used to say, *Da magistrum*, Give me the doctor; and yet, when Tertullian joined the sect of the Montanists, he was considered as out of the communion of the church.† Novatian and his followers were also excluded from it; though many of them were allowed to be pious; and though their error in refusing to readmit to communion those who had once lapsed by denying the faith, whatever evidence they gave afterwards of repentance, was not an error in the more essential parts of the christian religion. It is not said, that their profession was in any other respect contrary to the doctrine of the apos-

* Plea, &c. page 111.

† Du Pin says, all the ancients have spoken of him as one, who after he had joined the Montanists, was out of the communion of the church. Bibliotheca veterum Ecclesiast. vol. i. page 70.

tles. Christians in this period refused to have communion with heretics. The word heresy seems to have been then used in a larger sense, than that in which it is now taken. Tertullian defines heresy, *Quodcunque adversus veritatem sapit; etiam consuetudo*;* whatever opinion is held as wisdom, while it is against the truth; though recommended by ancient custom. Even Jerome long after gives this definition of a heretic: *Quiscunque aliter scripturam intelligit, quam sensus spiritus Sancti flagitat, quo conscripta est*,† that he is one who understands the scriptures otherwise, than the mind of the Holy Spirit requires. It is certain, that all, who were called heretics, were not equally opposers of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. Ærius in the fourth century was accounted a heretic, not so much on account of Arianism, with which he seems to have been falsely charged, as for his judgement about the identity of bishop and presbyter, and for his opposition to anniversary fasts and prayers for the dead. Meletius, says Du Pin, was a very good catholic; and yet he was for a time excluded from the communion of Pacclinus and Athanasius. The catholics in the fourth century refused to have communion with eminently pious men on account of their communion with Arians. Thus Theodolies and other bishops excluded Basil from their communion on account of his correspondence with Eustathius an Arian bishop.‡

It is evident, then, that there were some who, according to a judgement of charity, had communion with Christ, with whom, while they persisted in some error, the primitive christians deemed it neither safe nor warrantable to have sacramental communion.

In the third place, it may be observed, that the authority of councils was regarded by the primitive church as the ordinance of Christ; on which account their decrees, being found agreeable to the word of God, were received as rules of discipline. It is evident, that these decrees, while consonant to the scripture, were justly considered as terms of communion, though they did not belong to the essentials of christianity. Thus, one of the decrees of the council described in the xv. chapter of the Acts of the Apostles prohibited the practice of eating blood, while it gave offence to the Jewish converts. This regulation against giving offence, was as far from being an essential, as any thing that really belongs to christianity can be: Yet it was undoubtedly necessary to be observed by the members of those churches, to which the decrees of that council were delivered; and such as rejected this regulation, while the observation of it was necessary to avoid giving offence, were liable to censure, and if obstinate, to exclusion from sacramental communion. Such obligation is implied in the names given to the directions of this council, viz. necessary burdens and decrees, and in the delivery of them to several churches to be kept. A council held in Africa in the year 253, declared it to be an error to assert, that infants ought not to be baptised, till the eighth day after their birth. The council of Nice which met in the year 325, made several good regulations with regard to discipline; such as, that prohibiting the ordination of novices, or new converts, according to Paul's direction in 1 Tim. ii. 6: another prohibiting the practice of usury

* De virginibus velandis. † In epistolam ad Galat.

‡ Bibliotheca veterum Ecclesiasticorum, vol. 2, page 123.

among the clergy, in order to check the progress of covetousness: in opposing which the ministers of Christ ought to be exemplary, according to the apostles character of a bishop, that he should not be covetous or greedy of filthy lucre; and another prohibiting the rebaptism of those who had been baptised by the Novatians and other separatists; provided they professed the belief of the Trinity, and administered baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is obvious, that these decrees did not respect the most essential parts of the christian religion. The authority of councils was greatly respected by the ancient church: nor do I know any reason to believe, that it was her practice to admit any open opposers of the decrees of legitimate and approved councils to her sacramental communion.* It is true, councils are not infallible; and it would be easy to make a collection of erroneous and futile decrees of councils. So it would be easy to make a collection of the wicked and oppressive laws of civil states; but as no reasonable person would allow that to be an objection to the authority of laws in the civil state; so it cannot well be admitted as a sufficient objection to the authority of the decrees of ecclesiastical councils. The church is fallible: she may find her former judgements to have been wrong; in which case, she ought to correct them. But as long as she finds them agreeable to the word of God; she cannot consistently admit the open and obstinate opposers of them to her sacramental communion. This was the principle which regulated the communion of the ancient church. Indeed every society, civil and religious, so far as it is regular, adheres to the same principle.

In the fourth place, it may be observed, that, on account of the unity and uniformity of the ancient churches, their communion with one another, cannot be considered as an example of the catholic communion now pleaded for. Among churches, which it is supposed, are to have this communion with one another, there is not only some difference of opinions and practices, as there may be, in some degree, among the members of the same church; but each of these churches is constituted expressly for the purpose of maintaining its peculiar tenets and practices; and whoever joins with that church declares, *ipso facto*, or in doing so, his agreement with the tenets or practices, for the maintenance of which it exists as a separate society.

The end, for which one of these churches exists, is the maintenance of *Episcopacy*; the end of another of them is the support of *Antipædobaptism*; the end of a third is, the upholding of the *Congregational* or *Independent scheme of church order*. Thus, it is the case with these churches that they have opposite and contradictory professions. It was quite otherwise with the ancient churches, that had communion with one another. They were different in their local situation; but they were not constituted or maintained as separate churches, on account of differences in their public profession or practice.

Alex. Catholic communion proceeds upon this principle, that a difference in rites and customs, in worship, in different churches of Christ, should not dissolve the bonds of the union; a principle which was pro-

* The decrees of synods or councils, says Mr. Gibbon, speaking of this period, "regulated every important controversy of faith and discipline." The Decline of the Rom. Emp. chap. xv.

ceeded on by the ancient church. There were discordant parties in the apostolical church itself; as in modes of dress, to be used by persons attending public worship; there were disputes about the religious distinction of meats and days: but the apostle Paul reckoned, that matters of secondary moment, relating to the worship of God, were no justifiable cause of contention among christians. Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify; may build up and not pull down, another. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing but keeping the commandments of God. Accordingly, Paul circumcised Timothy to soothe a Jewish prejudice: he submitted, by the advice of the Presbyters at Jerusalem, to a useless but harmless ceremony in purifying himself, along with four men who had a vow on them, for the express purpose of disproving the charge of making war upon the customs belonging to the Divine worship, which the converts, belonging to the Jews, had retained from the ancient ceremonial. About customs, as customs, he strove not.*

Ruf. The case of the meats and days, with regard to which the christians at Rome were to exercise forbearance, and that of Paul's circumcising Timothy, have been already considered. But it may now be observed, that when you talk of rites and ceremonies, as carnal things, and of customs as customs, you forget the state of the question; which is not, whether we may have communion with those churches and their members, that have some rites or customs of an indifferent nature, which are not in use among us? But, the question under our consideration, is this: supposing that we have, in our united capacity, or as a church, exhibited to the world, a confession or testimony on behalf of certain truths of God's word, in opposition to the contrary erroneous opinions, and on behalf of certain commandments of God, in opposition to the commandments of men; whether we are still bound to join in sacramental communion with the avowed and obstinate opposers of one or more articles of that scriptural profession or testimony, on this consideration; that what is opposed, though it be really a truth or commandment of God, is not essentially necessary to salvation, or not assented to by every true christian? The only examples of your catholic communion, then, must be examples of the apostolic or ancient church, admitting to her sacramental communion avowed and obstinate opposers of some article of her scriptural profession; of something which was, both really and in the church's confession, a truth revealed or a duty enjoined in the word of God; though, compared with other truths or duties, it might be considered as of less importance. The import of this catholic scheme is not, that circumcision or uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping of the commandments of God: it is rather to this effect, *The keeping of the least of Gods' commandments is nothing; but only the keeping of the greater and more important.*

The question is not, whether harmless ceremonies, such as you account Paul's purifying himself with four men who had a vow upon them, (though perhaps some would think it an unbecoming reflection on the apostle and his advisers, to say that, as the case was circumstanced, it was useless) ought to be a bar to sacramental communion? but whether an avowed and obstinate attachment to superstitious cere-

* Plea, &c. pages 49, 50, 51, 52, 53.

monies, that are justly condemned, not merely as useless, but as corrupting the instituted worship of God, by taking away something from it, or by adding some human invention: whether this, or any thing else equally contrary to the word of God, be not a bar to that communion? In short, your examples of the communion of the ancient churches, are nothing to your purpose; unless they be examples of their having sacramental communion with open and determined opposers of something, which, though not deemed essential, is really a part of the christian religion; and which is acknowledged in the public profession of the church, to be so.

§ 30. *Alex.* In the ancient church, various observances arose out of different climates, previous habits, social institutions, national character; and were as necessarily continued, and naturally increased. They produced, however, no discord, no inconvenience, till about the middle of the second century; when sharp and vehement contests arose between the Asiatic and Western Churches, about the celebration of Easter.

Ruf. The particulars you mention, different climates, previous habits, social institutions, national character, might warrant and require various applications of the doctrines of the scripture, in opposition to error, and also of duty enjoined, in opposition to sinful practices. The consideration of the particular cases in which these applications of doctrines and duties were made, might shew them to be all agreeable to the word of God, and so no ground of discord. And supposing some of these applications to be erroneous and discordant, they might not enter into the matter of the public profession of any of those churches. In this case, the communion of these churches with one another, would be no example of the scheme of sacramental communion between churches, whose public professions are so opposite to one another, as those of the Presbyterians and Episcopalians; of the Pædobaptists and Antipædobaptists.

The contest about the celebration of Easter, is nothing to the purpose; that is, it is no example of the church's holding sacramental communion with the open and obstinate opposers of any part of her scriptural profession; because, as has been already observed, neither the opinion of Victor, nor that of the Asiatics, on this subject, belonged to the matter of such a profession. If the one party had been so faithful as to condemn the keeping of such a holiday, because it was neither appointed by Christ, nor mentioned by the apostles; and the other party had openly avowed their resolution to persist in the superstitious observation of it, their sacramental communion with one another, would have been an instance of what you call catholic communion. But, while the observation of Easter was considered by all parties, as only a custom received from their ancestors, and no matter of faith, or of their scriptural profession; the different opinions about it, could not affect sacramental communion, like the differences among several denominations of Protestants, about points belonging to the matter of their religious profession. Accordingly, Irenæus, in his letter to Victor, says, "Not only the day, but the species of this fast was disputed. "Some thought, that only one day was to be kept; some two, some "more; others supposed, that it was to be continued forty hours, in-"cluding both day and night. This variety of opinion, adds Irenæus,

"had not its rise in our time, but obtained before; as the tradition of "Easter had been handed down by our predecessors to those who "came after them, not, it seems, with accuracy; but, in the simple "and careless manner of common conversation."* It is not conceivable, that Irenæus would have spoken of this rite in such a manner, if he had considered it as really belonging to the scriptural profession of the christian church. As to what Irenæus adds about Polycarp's holding Easter to have been kept on the 14th day of the first Jewish month, by John the disciple of our Lord, and by the other apostles; Polycarp could as little persuade Anicetus that it was so, as Anicetus could persuade Polycarp that Peter and Paul kept it, as the Western Church pretended, on the Lord's day; which might sometimes be the 14th, but was oftener another day of the month. Hence, we cannot reasonably think, that Irenæus accounted it any thing else, but an uncertain tradition.

Alex. Do you not remember a letter of Fermilian, Bishop of Cæsarea, in Capadocia, in the year 256, to Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, censuring Stephen, Bishop of Rome, for his arrogance, in condemning Cyprian and the African Churches; which had determined, that the baptism of heretics was not to be held valid, and in treating the bishops who adhered to this judgment, with the most insolent contempt. Those who are at Rome, says Firmilian, do not entirely observe all things which have been handed down from the beginning: and the Romans appeal in vain to the authority of the apostles, for their own usages; as is evident, from their differences about the days of Easter; and about many other particulars of divine worship: and all things are not observed there, precisely as they are observed at Jerusalem. He adds, that in many other places, a diversity of usages obtained, without any infringement of the peace and unity of the catholic church. Hence, Firmilian concludes, that Stephen was highly culpable for breaking the communion between the Roman and the African churches. To the same purpose, Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, lays it down as a rule, that wherever we find customs established, that are neither contrary to religion nor good morals, and such as have any tendency to promote amendment of life, we ought, instead of disapproving, to commend and imitate them; unless our compliance would give such offence to the weaker brethren, as would render it more hurtful than beneficial. Again, says that venerable father, I have often perceived, with pain and grief, that weak christians are exceedingly disturbed by the contentious obstinacy and superstitious timidity of some brethren, who, in such matters as cannot be certainly determined, either by the authority of the holy scriptures, or by the tradition of the universal church, or by utility in the reformation of life, raise litigious questions, as thinking nothing right but what they do themselves.

Thus it appears, that in the ancient church, sacramental communion was not hindered by different usages and rites in religious worship. It becomes the dignified and prudent christian, as Augustine says, to do as he sees the church do, wherever he may come.†

* Non enim de die tantum disceptatio est, sed et de ipsa specie jejunii, siquidem alii unum sibi diem jejunandum esse putant, &c. Irenæus apud Eusebium, lib. v. cap. 23.

† Plea, &c. pages 60, 61, 62, 63.

Ruf. The observations of Firmilian and Augustine, are very proper, as applied to things which are not certainly determined by the holy scriptures, and which the church of Christ has not professed to be so; or, as applied to customs, that are not contrary to faith nor good morals. But the rites, on account of which we may warrantably refuse to have sacramental communion with some churches and their members, are of a very different kind: they are such as, we know, have been found and declared by the church of Christ, to be contrary to the word of God; to be idolatrous or superstitious. When Augustine described the points, that ought not to hinder sacramental communion, as matters not certainly warranted by the authority of the apostles, or rites not contrary to religion; it was plainly implied, that he disapproved of having such communion with those who denied doctrines, certainly warranted by the apostolical authority, or who used rites contrary to the apostolical religion.

Who can believe, that Augustine would bid a christian do whatever he sees any corrupt church do, wherever he may happen to come, or to practise what he is convinced, in his conscience, is vain superstition; such as crossing, sprinkling with holy water, praying to saints, bowing to images, and other usages which he may see some churches practise? The truth is, Augustine was speaking of churches, which made the same public profession; and of usages, which, on all sides, were considered as of an indifferent nature, and in which there was nothing immoral or impious.

§ 31. *Alex.* The primitive church did not consider her unity as broken, nor a sufficient cause of interrupting communion as afforded, by imperfection in her moral discipline. There was much greater aberration from correct conduct, among both clergy and laity, in the third century, than perhaps would be tolerated now in either, by any evangelical church. And yet, the most learned, laborious, holy men, the most stern reprovers of public declension, were the champions of one communion, and the most strenuous opposers of schism and separation.

Ruf. It is generally acknowledged, that though the church had, in the third century, declined from her primitive purity, she still retained the severity of her discipline. The exercise of this discipline, might be less rigid or exact in one part of the church, than in another; as is often the case, in different congregations, belonging to the same ecclesiastical body. But I recollect no instance of any part of the ancient church allowing communion to be held with avowed opposers of any article of her scriptural profession; and therefore, sacramental communion, in the circumstances of diversity now mentioned, was quite different from your scheme of catholic communion. The *one communion*, for which these champions contended, was a communion in *one profession*, not in *many different and contradictory professions* of the christian religion. These champions agreed with Rufinus, who said, "The holy church is that which keeps the faith of Christ entire."* Hence, we conclude, that it was then reckoned incumbent on the church of Christ, to hold fast the whole of that scriptural profession, which she had attained; and, consequently, that she could not

* Illa est ecclesia sancta quæ fidem Christi integram servat. Rufinus in Symbolum.

warrantably admit to her communion, an open and obstinate opposer of any part of that profession.

Whatever strong expressions may be found in some of the writings of the fathers against schism; yet, it does not appear to be their deliberate judgement, that all such as declined sacramental communion with a particular church, on account of its corruptions in doctrine, worship, or government, were to be considered as separating from the catholic church.

"It is Christ alone," said Ambrose, "whom none may desert or "change. The faith of a church is first to be inquired after: If any "church rejects the faith, we are to leave its communion."* "The "house of God," said Jerome, "which is the church, does not consist "in walls, but in the truth of the doctrines taught there."† "And "they are the church," said Cyprian, "who abide in the house of "God."‡

Alex. One thing, which shewed the catholic communion of the ancients, was this, that every church received into communion, as fully as her own members, ministers and private christians, from any or every other church, provided evidence was obtained of their good standing; such as letters of recommendation, or what are called testimonials or certificates, from their respective churches. And on the other hand, ministers and private christians deemed it their duty, and made it their practice, to join in communion with whatever church they might happen to visit, in any part of the world.‖

Ruf. This agrees with what I have already represented as the state of the ancient church. The whole church of Christ, however much the parts of it were divided by local situation, was considered as of one profession, and of one communion. There was no more difference between the most distant churches, in profession or practice, than there is now among several particular congregations, under the government of one Presbytery. Hence, it was then the purport of testimonials, which persons brought from the most distant churches, that the bearers made, in all respects, the same public profession of the faith, with that of the church to which they applied for admission to sacramental communion. Whereas a testimonial, according to the pretended catholic scheme, would run in very different terms: it would only attest that the public profession of the bearers, agreed with that of the church to which they came, in the essentials of the christian religion: in other respects, the former might be contradictory to the latter. Testimonials of this sort, seem to have been unknown in the ancient church.

§ 32 *Alex.* The ancients agreed in one point: viz. That different communions exclude the idea of unity. Hence, on the one hand, the Novatians, Luciferians, Donatists, who set up restrictive communions,

* Christus est solus quem nemo deserere debet, nemo mutare. Fides imprimis ecclesiæ quærenda mandatur. Siquæ est ecclesia quæ fidem respuat, deserenda est. Ambrosius, lib. i. de pœnitentia.

† Domus Dei quæ est ecclesia, non in parietibus consistit, sed in dogmatum veritate. Ecclesia vera est, ubi vera fides est. Hieronymo, in Psal. xxxiii.

‡ Illi sunt ecclesia, qui in Dei domo permanent. Cypri. Epist. 55.

‖ Plea, &c. pages 130, 131.

acted on the avowed principle, that the catholic church, from which they withdrew, had ceased to be the church of Christ. On the other hand, they who condemned the separatists, held, that, by the very fact of their separate communion, they threw themselves out of the church of God. Both sides allowed, that two churches, refusing communion with each other, do thereby renounce the relation to each other as parts of a common whole; that is, of the catholic church. This position is assumed in the most unqualified manner, as incontrovertible, by both Cyprian and Augustine in their writings against the Novatians and Donatists. The Novatian sect, which carried its rigour so far as to shut the doors of re-admission upon the lapsed, refused to hold communion with the rest of the church expressly on account of her alleged corruptions. Against them Cyprian wrote his treatise on the unity of the church; the whole bent of which is to shew that their separation was unscriptural and unlawful, and that they who will not hold communion with all and every part of the catholic church, cast themselves out of her pale, and forfeit their share of her benefits. In that treatise, after shewing the invisible unity of the church, Cyprian then demands; "Does he, who maintains not this "unity, imagine, that he possesses the faith? Does he, who sets "himself against the church, cherish a confidence of his being in the "church? Whoever is disjoined from the church is joined to an adul-"teress; is separated from the promises made to the church. Nor can "that man attain to the rewards of Christ, who leaves the church of "Christ. He is an alien; he is profane; he is an enemy."

These things are spoken of the Novatians, who were not accused of unsound doctrine. The fact of their separation, though under the plea of cultivating and preserving a higher degree of purity, constituted their offence, and drew upon them the general indignation of the church of God.*

The Donatists in Africa, treading in the steps of the Novatians, set up a sectarian communion upon the very same pretext. "The church," said they, "was polluted: there were bad men in her fellowship: "their consciences would not permit them to remain, lest they should "be contaminated."

Augustine tells these Donatists, that Cyprian, in a letter to Antonianus, shews, "that, before the final separation of the just and the un-"just, we are, in no manner, to withdraw from the unity of the church, "on account of the commixture of bad men with good."

"You maintain," continues Augustine, "that, by the contagion of "wicked Africans, (that is, by holding communion with the African "churches, which the Donatists pronounced to be too impure for their "fellowship,) by the contagion of wicked Africans, the church had "perished from the face of the earth; excepting what remains in the "party of Donatists, as in the wheat separated from the tares and the "chaff. You are, therefore, according to your error, or rather mad-"ness, compelled to embrace in your accusation all the churches, of "which we read in apostolic and canonical scriptures. But these "Africans whose sin you dare falsely charge upon other nations, are "either innocent or guilty. If they are innocent, they share with "those transmarine churches in the kingdom of God. If guilty, they

* Plea, &c. pages 123, 124, 125.

"share with them, as tares with the wheat; nor shall they be able to "hurt, in Africa itself, those, who, although knowing their character, "will not, on their account, separate themselves from the unity of "the church."

This testimony establishes the great fact, that the principles and conduct of the Donatists, with regard to communion, christian and ministerial, were at war with the faith and practice of the whole church of God. And wherein their principles and practice in this matter, and their reasoning in defence of both, differ from those of such churches as will hold no communion but with members of their own sect, let those good and pure intentioned men who defend the restriction, most solemnly consider. In one thing there is a remarkable difference. The latter acknowledge as true churches and exemplary christians, many whose communion, they notwithstanding reject. But the former saw that such a confession overturns the very foundation upon which a separate communion is reared. They, therefore, carried their principles through; and, in order to justify their schism, maintained, that all, but their own, had ceased to be true churches. On this head, the palm of consistency, at least, must be awarded to the Donatists.

The sect of the Luciferians, so named from Lucifer, Bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia, was too feeble and ephemeral to attract regard in the general question. Their case, however, tends, among other facts, to shew the strength of the ties, which they endeavoured to break; and to establish the doctrine of the obligation, that christians are under, to hold communion with all and every part of the catholic church.*

Ruf. I confess, that the passages you refer to in Cyprian and Augustine, taken abstractly or by themselves, seem to assert, as you observe, in the most unqualified manner, the unlawfulness of separating from the Roman and African churches. But how are these passages to be understood? Are we to understand them as meaning, that it was unlawful to withdraw from the Roman and African churches in any case; and that all christians were bound to believe, as they believed, and to practice, as they practised, in matters of religion? Are we to understand these venerable fathers as directing people to join themselves, or adhere, to certain combinations of men at Rome or in Africa, calling themselves the only church of Christ, with certain men called bishops at their head; not allowing any to judge, whether the matter of their public profession, and the manner of maintaining it, were agreeable to the word of Christ or not? On this supposition, the most bigotted Papist never carried the claims of the church of Rome higher than these fathers did. But as this supposition is manifestly absurd in itself; so it is inconsistent with the other parts of the writings of these fathers in which they represent it as the duty of christians to examine, whether the doctrine and order of particular churches be agreeable to the scripture, or not; and to adhere to them or withdraw from them, according to the result of their examination. To this purpose, many passages of the writings of these fathers may be produced. "Let us not regard," says Augustine to the Donatists, "what I say, "or what you say; but let us hear what the Lord says. To the au-

* Plea, &c. pages 69, 70, 73, 75, 76, 139.

"thority of Divine Scripture we yield our consent, our faith, our sub-"mission. There let us seek the church, and the determination of "our cause."* Again, he says, "In the scriptures we have learned "Christ, in the scriptures we have learned the church. We all have "the scriptures in our hands. Why then do we not all retain Christ "and the church?"†

Chrysostom, on the gospel of Matthew, has these words. "The sa-"cred scripture explains itself, and suffers no one to err. Let us "then, I earnestly beseech you, follow the sacred scripture accu-"rately."‡

"This is the cause," says he, "of all our evils, that, in the discus-"sion of questions, many through ignorance are unable to adduce such "testimonies from the scriptures, as are pertinent to the purpose. "What pity it is, that, while every artificer will defend his art, the "christian should be unable to give a reason for his religious profes-"sion."‖

"Whence does any one," says the same father in another place, "who wishes to know what is the true church of Christ, attain that "knowledge, but by the scripture? The Lord, therefore, knowing, "that in matters of religion, there would be so great confusion in the "latter days, enjoins christians, who desire to be established in the "true faith, to betake themselves to nothing but the scriptures. "Otherwise their regard for other things will ensnare and ruin them, "through their ignorance of what belongs to the character of a true "church of Christ; leading them to a compliance with the abomi-"nation of desolation which stands within the holy places of the "church."§

From these and similar passages we are led to infer, that it was the mind of these fathers, that we ought to have sacramental communion with a church whose public profession, and whose manner of maintaining her profession, we have found most agreeable to the scriptures; and not with any that, in these respects, openly oppose such a church.

Thus, in order to avoid charging these fathers with absurdity and inconsistency, we must not understand them as meaning, that it was

* Non audiamus, hæc dico; sed audiamus, hæc dicit Dominus. Sunt certe libri Dominici, quorum autoritate utrique consentimus, utrique servimus: ibi quæramus ecclesiam; ibi discutiamus causam nostram. Aug. De Unitate ecclesiæ.

† In scripturis didicimus Christum, in scripturis didicimus ecclesiam. Has scripturas communiter habemus. Quare non in eis et Christum et ecclesiam communiter retinemus. Aug. Epist. 116.

‡ Sacra Scriptura seipsam exponit, et neminem errare sinit. Oro igitur et obsecro, ut, ad amussim, canonem sacræ Scripturæ sequamur. Hom. 13. Lat. ver.

‖ Hoc omnium malorum est causa quod multi nesciunt Scripturarum testimonia in opportunis rebus adducere absurdum est, quod omnes generatim opifices quisque pro suæ artis professione pugnet: Christianus autem non passit suæ religionis offerre rationem. Hom. 16. in Joannem.

§ Qui vult cognosere, quæ sit vera ecclesia Christi, unde cognoscit, nisi tantummodo per Scripturas? Sciens ergo Dominus tantam confusionem rerum, novissimis diebus esse futuram; ideo mandat, ut Christiani qui sunt in Christianitate, volentes accipere firmitatem fidei veræ; ad nullam rem fugiant, nisi ad Scripturas. Alioqui si ad alia respexerint, scandalizabuntur et peribunt, non intelligentes quæ sit vera Ecclesia. Et per hoc incident in abominationem desolationis quæ stat in sanctis Ecclesiæ locis. Hom. 49. in Matthœum.

simply by the fact of separation from the Roman and African churches, that the Novatians and Donatists cast themselves out of the catholic church, and forfeited their share of her benefits; but it was rather because their separation had no cause or no sufficient cause on the part of the Roman and African churches; and a criminal cause, on the part of the separatists.

1st. There was no sufficient cause of separation on the part of these churches. The Novatians had no scriptural reason to blame the Roman church for receiving into communion such as had fallen by compliance with heathen persecutors, after they had given satisfying evidence of repentance; the sin of such offenders, was not greater, than that of the incestuous person, whom the apostle directed the Corinthians to receive upon a credible profession of repentance. With regard to the Donatists, the immediate cause of their separation was the case of Cecilian's ordination to the office of Bishop of Carthage, which the Donatists said, was illegal; because Cecilian had been ordained by a *traditor*, that is, by one of those who, in the time of Diocletian's persecution, had delivered the sacred writings to the magistrates to be burnt; and because he was said to have hindered victuals from being conveyed to the christian confessors and martyrs, during that persecution. But, on a trial of Cecilian's case at Rome, he was acquitted; the witnesses brought by the Donatists confessed that they had nothing to say against him. But, supposing, that the personal faults, with which Cecilian was charged by the Donatists, had been real, and that there had been some mistake in his acquittance by their opponents; yet this matter could never justify their separation; for it is granted, on all hands, that the private and personal misconduct of some within the pale of a church, and transient mistakes of her office-bearers in the determination of such cases, will not warrant separation from her communion.

2dly, On the part of both the Novatians and the Donatists, there appears to have been a criminal cause. On this subject, these fathers speak with sufficient clearness and precision. Cyprian shews, that Novatian was cruel and unreasonable in telling those delinquents, whom he exhorted to endeavour to efface the memory of their offences by their tears and good works, that, notwithstanding all their endeavours, they must die out of the communion of the church. See a letter written by Cyprian in the year 252.

Theodoret, writing concerning Novatian, says, "That he called the "followers of his sect not only Novatians, but also *Cathari*, that is, "*pure;* and feared not the charge which the Lord God brought against "some who said, each of them, I am clean; touch me not: adding, "These are a smoke in my nostrils; a fire burning all the day: for "the Lord resisteth the proud."*

To the same purpose, says Isidorus, "They denominate themselves "*Cathari*, on account of their pretended purity; for, they, glorying "in their merits, refuse reconciliation to those who have fallen, how-

* Qui suæ sectæ asseclæ erant, eos non solum Novatianos, sed etiam *Catharous*, id est, mundos appellavit; et nec Domini Dei accusationem veritus est, quam fecit adversus nonnullos dicentes, mundus sum, ne me tangas; et subjunxit, Hi sunt fumus in naso meo; ignis omni die ardens—Dominus enim superbis resistit. Theod. Lib. 3. Heret. fabu. citatus in Forbesii Instructionibus, page 710.

"ever penitent; they condemn widows who marry, as adulteresses; "they represent themselves as purer than others."*

They also obliged such as came over to them from the other parts of the christian church, to be rebaptised.

The Donatists carried these evils to a still greater height. With regard to the opinion they had of their own perfection, Optatus, a Bishop of Melevi, in Africa, who wrote a long treatise concerning the schism of the Donatists, reproves them severely. "Ye," says he, "who would appear holy and innocent to men, whence is that sanc-"tity, which you arrogate to yourselves? a sanctity which the apostle "John dares not claim: for he says, *If we say, we have no sin, we "deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* Christ, in the gospel, "without naming you, delineates your character, in the parable of the "Pharisee and the Publican; which was spoken to them, who trusted "in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others."†

To the same purpose, says Augustine, "I forbear to speak of the ne-"farious pride, with which they represent the character and manners "of themselves and their followers, as free from every stain, from "every fault."‡

Another error, furiously contended for, by the Donatists, was, that sincere christians were polluted by being in the same church communion with the wicked. So that there could be no church, where the wicked were suffered to remain.

"Such were the pride and insanity," says Optatus, "of the Dona-"tists, in this respect, that they broke in pieces the altars, on which "the Catholics had offered the sacrament of the body and blood of the "Lord; kneaded the fragments into masses, and sold them to the "Pagans. In many places, they exorcised and washed the walls, "within which the Catholics had celebrated Divine worship: nor "would they permit the bodies of the Catholics to be interred in the "public burial places. They threw the sacramental elements, conse-"crated by the Catholics, to the dogs. They shaved the heads of the "priests that came over from the Catholics to their party, as having "been defiled by the other Catholic priests: observing the words of "the prophet Haggai, *Those things, which an unclean person hath "touched, are unclean.* They not only refused to eat with the Catho-"lics, to salute them, and to be called their brethren; but would not "bear to converse with them, even about those matters of religion, "that were in dispute between them."

* Cathari pro munditis ita se nominaverunt; gloriantes enim de suis meritis, lapsis pœnitentibus reconciliationem negant; viduas si nupserint, tanquam adulteras damnant; mundiores se cœteris prædicant. Isidorus Hispalensis. Vide Forbesii, Instructiones, ibidem.

† Vos ipsi qui sancti et innocentes videri ab hominibus vultis, dicite, unde est ista sanctitas, quam vobis licentius usurpatis? quam Johannes Apostolus profiteri non audet, qui dicit: *Si dixerimus, quia pecatum non habemus; nos ipsos decipimus, et veritas in nobis non est.*

Sed ut apparet, hoc vobis dictat nutrix vestra, superbia, quam Christus in Evangelio testificatur: qui etsi nomina vestra non dixit, per similitudinem tamen vestras mores ostendit. Sic enim scriptum est: Dicebat Jesus hanc similitudinem, propter eos qui se sanctos putant, et contemnunt cæteros. Opta. lib. 2. contra Parmenianum.

‡ Omitto dicere quam scelerata superbia inquiunt neminem esse inter collegas suos, vel seipsos cum aliqua macula vel vitio morum inquinatos. Vide Forb. Instruc. page 715.

"Augustine complains of Proculianus, a Donatist bishop, that he re-"fused to receive his letters. The vain pretence," says he, "of "having their society perfectly purged from evil men, as wheat from "chaff, is hurtful to themselves: for, on account of it, they dare not "restrain or correct the most criminal and flagrant disorders in the "societies, over which they preside; lest they should be obliged to "confess, that there are evil men in their communion."*

A third Novatian error, professed by the Donatists, was, that by the mistake which, they supposed, was committed in the case of Cæcilian, the whole African church of the Catholics, was polluted and unchurched; and that other churches, which communicated with the Africans, were in the same case. So that, according to them, there was then no true church on earth, but that of the Donatists. In the conference at Carthage, "the Catholics stated, in opposition to this "error, that they had found abundance of passages in the scriptures, "which promised that the church was to exist in all nations, and in "the whole world; as also, that in the gospels and in the Acts of the "Apostles, the cities and provinces are mentioned, through which it "actually spread, after its beginning at Jerusalem, in order that it "might be extended to Africa; not by the emigration, but by the in-"crease of its members. They denied, however, that they had found "any testimony in the Divine oracles, intimating, that it was to be "extinguished in other parts of the world; and that it was to remain "in Africa alone, and among no other people than those of the Dona-"tist party."†

From the passages of the fathers, now produced, it appears evident, that they considered the causes of the separation of the Novatians and Donatists from the churches of Christ, in Rome and Africa, as, on the part of these churches, either false or insufficient, and, on the part of the Novatians and Donatists, as criminal; and that, in condemning the separation of these sects, as cutting them off from the catholic church, the fathers had respect to these causes, and not to the fact *alone* of their separate communion.

It was a just observation of Cassander, that "It is not separation in "itself, but the cause of it, that makes schism."‡

On supposition, that there had been a particular church, as represented by her ministry, and by her courts of judicature, persisting obstinately in a course of defection from the purity that she had attained in doctrine, worship or government; and that a minor part, on

* Quæritur Augustinus de Proculiano Episcopo Donatisto, quod literas ejus noluerit accipere, Epistola 169. Isti sunt infelices, qui se ob omni malorum congregatione, tanquam triticum a paleis, purgatum esse præsumant. Per istam vanitatem præjudicaverunt sibi, ut in populis, quibus præsunt, iniquissimas et flagetiosissimas turbas non audeant corripere, ut corrigantur; ne per hoc cogantur confiteri, quia mali sunt. Vide Forb. Instruct. page 716.

† Narraverunt Catholici se innumerabilia testimonia invenisse, quibus promissa est ecclesia futura in omnibus gentibus et toto terrarum arbe, sicut et in Evangeliis et in actibus Apostolicis, et in Epistolis, ipsa loca et civitates et provincias leguntur, per quas crevit, incipiens ab Hierusalem, ut in de se etiam in Africam, non migrando, sed crescendo diffunderet. Negant autem se aliquod invenisse testimonium Divinorum eloquiorum, ubi dictum est eam perituram de cœteris partibus mundi, et in sola Africa Donate parte mansuram. Vide Witsii Dissertationem de schismate Donatistarum, cap. 7. sect. 28.

‡ Separatio non facit schisma, sed causa. Lib. de offic. pii viri.

the account of her obstinacy in such defection, and in order to maintain a judicial testimony for the purity she had attained, had found it necessary to make secession from her ministerial and sacramental communion; it does not appear, that in such a case, the ancient church, in any of the three first centuries, or perhaps even in the more degenerate times of the fourth and fifth, would have been led, by her received principles, to condemn such a party, as chargeable either with heresy or schism:—Not with heresy; while it was supposed, that there was nothing in the matter of their public profession, but what ought to be held by the Catholic church:—Not with schism; since their declining sacramental communion with their brethren, was owing to the refusal of these brethren, to concur with them in the necessary duty of maintaining the whole matter of their public profession. In this case, they who were obstinate in turning away from their former scriptural profession, however great their majority, would have been the separatists.

§ 33. Do you bid those, who reject your catholic scheme of communion, show wherein their principles differ from those of the Novatians and Donatists?

The difference is so obvious, that it seems strange, that a person, who has paid any attention to our principles, in opposition to your scheme of catholic communion, and to those of the Novatians and Donatists, should confound them. We believe, that a particular church, is so far a faithful and reforming church, as she is holding fast the scriptural profession that she has attained; and is therefore refusing to have sacramental communion with the avowed enemies of any article of that profession. Yet, we are far from pretending, with the Novatians and Donatists, that such a church is altogether pure, and without blemish. When we have been led to exhibit a judicial testimony for truth, and have found it to be our duty to maintain it, in the way of secession from churches that are drawing back from such a profession, even though they still have what are called the essentials, and, it may be, more than the essentials, of a true church of Christ: in such a case, we find it necessary to decline sacramental communion with them, in order that we may not be involved in the guilt of acting unfaithfully and inconsistently with our profession. These churches may be, in the sense now mentioned, true churches of Christ; though, in some particulars, they obstinately refuse to make such a public profession, as they ought to make, according to that character; and though our persuasion of the unlawfulness of going along with them, in these particulars, keep us back from joining with them in sacramental communion. Hence, we abhor the exterminating principles of the Novatians and Donatists, who taught that the catholic church, out of which none could be saved, was limited to the precincts of their external church communion. Your giving the palm of consistency to the Novatians and Donatists, proceeds upon the mere assumption, that we cannot withdraw from the sacramental communion of a particular church or her members, without denying them to belong to the catholic church; a supposition which is contrary both to the truth and to the judgement of the ancient church.

§ 34. You say, that when the fathers condemned the Novatians and Donatists, they declared, that by the very fact of their separation,

they threw themselves out of the church of God, or the Catholic church. But this is a misrepresentation. The truth is, the fathers charged these sects with holding, that the churches of Rome and Africa were not true churches of Christ, and no part of the Catholic church. The schism of the Donatists, said these fathers, turned into *heresy*. What this *heresy* was, Augustine tells us in the following words: "The "Donatists made a schism on the account of Cæcilian, who had been "ordained Bishop of Carthage against their will. But, after the affair "of Cæcilian was over, their schism led them into a heresy; which "supposed, that the church of Christ had perished through the whole "world, except in the party of the Donatists."*

Thus, Augustine makes the heresy, by which they cast themselves out of the Catholic church, quite a distinct thing from their schism, or separation from the African church. But it does not appear, that the fathers held, that the Novatians and Donatists did not belong to the Catholic church. According to them, the church was termed *Catholic*, not only on account of her great extent under the New Testament, but also, on account of the profession made in various places, of the same faith in Christ, in opposition to heretical doctrine. To this purpose, is the expression in the Epistle to the Smyrneans, ascribed to Ignatius: "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic church."† "The Catholic church," says Augustine, "is diffused from the ris-"ing to the setting sun, by the splendour of one faith."‡ But the Novatians and Donatists were not charged with denying the true faith, excepting in the heresy mentioned in the passage of Augustine, just now quoted: and it does not appear to have been the opinion of these fathers, that a particular church, continuing to hold fast her profession of the doctrine of Christ, though separated from the sacramental communion of another particular church, ceases to be, on that account, a part of the Catholic church.

Augustine allows, that those who are excommunicated, may belong to the Catholic church. "We do not," says he, "separate from the "people of God, those whom, by deposition from office, or by excom-"munication, we reduce to a lower station, for the exercise of repent-"ance."‖ How much more would he allow, that people may belong to the Catholic church, who have separated from the sacramental communion of some particular church, not on account of any thing commendable in that church, but only on account of its corruptions, which, nobody will say, belong to the character of the Catholic church? I think, it cannot be shewn from the writings of the fathers, that they ever granted, the refusal of the Novatians or Donatists, to hold sacramental communion with the churches of Rome and Africa, was on account of one real corruption, habitually, publicly, and obstinately persisted in, and justified by those churches. Nor can it be shewn,

* Primum propter Cæcilianum contra suam voluntatem ordinatum ecclesiæ Carthaginensis Episcopum, schisma fecerunt. Sed post causam cum eo dictam et finitam—in hæresim schisma verterunt; tanquam si ecclesia Christi, de toto terrarum orbe perierit, atque in Africa, in Donati parte solum remanserit.

† Opou an e Christas Jesous, ekei catholike ecclesia.

‡ Ecclesia Catholica a solis ortu usque ad occasum unius fidei splendore diffunditur.

‖ Neque enim, a populo Dei separamus quos vel degradendo vel excommunicando, ad humiliorem pœnitendo locum redigimus. Lib. cont. Donatistes.

that if this had been the case, and sufficiently proved, the fathers, would, on that account only, have condemned their refusal of communion with these churches, as rendering them outcasts from the Catholic church.

In the accounts we have of the conference before mentioned between the Catholics and the Donatists in the year 411, we do not find, that it was denied by the former, that the latter belonged to the Catholic church.

"As to the question," says Witsius, "Whether the Catholics or "Donatists belonged to the Catholic church, scarcely any thing seems "to have been regularly or expressly determined in this conference. "In general, the Catholics produced various passages of scripture in "order to prove, that the church was to be diffused through the whole "world; and that there were many particular churches, belonging to "it, founded by the apostles, with which it was manifest that the Do-"natists did not hold communion. To this observation the Donatists "made no reply. But, in order to determine the question between "them and their opponents, it would have been necessary to have "given some other characters or marks of a religious society's belong-"ing to the Catholic church, than the word and sacraments; these be-"ing nearly the same in both communions. But, perhaps," says Witsius, "no other marks or characters can be given; and he thinks, "that it was justly observed by Baldwin, that, if the Donatists com-"municated with the Catholic church both in doctrine, and in rites and "ceremonies, though they did not communicate with persons, whom "they shunned as polluted, their schism seemed to be only a schism "of peevishness, or ill humour."*

The best confutation of the scheme of the Donatists is allowed to be the six books of Optatus, bishop of Melevi. This work may be con-considered, as the most authentic representation of the judgement of the fathers and of their way of reasoning against the Donatists. He wrote towards the end of the fourth century. If the fathers had considered the separation of the Donatists from the African church as, in itself, a separation from the Catholic church, Optatus would have insisted on this as a principal argument against that sect. How little he rested on this argument we may understand from the account which Du Pin gives of that work. The first book, according to him, contains the history of the rise of the Donatist party, and justifies Cecilian. In the third book, Optatus vindicates the Catholics, from the charge of having caused violence to be used against the Donatists. In the fourth book, he refutes this opinion of the Donatists, that the

* De quæstione quos Ecclesia esset, an penes eos qui *Catholici* dicebantur, an penes Donatistas, vix quidquam rite atque ordine in collatione actum esse videtur. Catholici quidem generatim multa protulerunt testimonia, quibus probare niterentur ecclesiam per totum terrarum orbem diffundi, multasque esse ad ipsam unicam pertinentes Apostolorum labore fundatas, quibus Donatistas non communicare manifestum est. Sed ad id siluerunt Donatistæ. Et sane, si verum fateri volumus, erat ea quæstio et admodum difficilis et parum necessaria: quod utrobique propemodum eadem sonaret doctrina, et forma rituum consimilis conspiceretur. Unde ad ecclesiam dignoscendam aliis indiciis opus fuit, quam doctrinæ et sacramentorum. An vero præter hæc solida indicia sint, dubitari haud immerito potest; aut fartasse ne potest quidam. Et vero si Donatistæ, ut bene Balduinus, cum ecclesia catholica communicarent tam in doctrina fidei, quam in ritibus et ceremoniis, tametsi cum personis non communicarent, quas tanquam pollutas refugiebant, non nisi morositatis schisma fuisse Videtur. Dessertatione de schisma Donatistarum, cap. 7. Sect. 35.

ordinances of the Catholics were to be shunned on account of the personal sins of those who were admitted to partake of them. In the fifth book, he proves, that the Donatists were criminal in reiterating baptism. In the sixth, he exposes the impieties and sacrileges of the Donatists. It is only in the second book, that he argues against them on account of their separation from the church: and here the principal point, which he proves against the Donatists, is, that their party was not the catholic church. This he proves, according to Du Pin, from the *extent* of the catholic church; and from their want of *union with the chair of Saint Peter*; an argument, which can have no weight with any but Papists, *who hold the church of Rome to be synonymous with the Catholic church.* Du Pin does not say, that Optatus asserts in any part of his work, that the Donatists did not belong to the Catholic church.

With regard to Lucifer, the friend of Athanasius, and the zealous opposer of compliance with the Arians, it is probable that he has been unjustly stigmatized. Perhaps justice is done the Luciferians by two late writers, Milner and Haweis; the one says, that, if the Luciferians imbibed the spirit of Lucifer, they must have been firm and sincere in the love of the truth: and the other reckons the Luciferians among the purer party. I have said so much on the subject of the Novatians and the Donatists, because it has been long the favourite common-place of time-servers in their invectives against any whose honesty and love of the truth led them to decline sacramental communion with the most numerous and fashionable party on account of their avowed obstinacy in their errors and corruptions. It is a topic that has been much used by the Papists against the Protestants; by the Episcopalians in England against the Non-conformists; by those who defend or palliate the defections of the established church of Scotland against the Seceders; and now by the advocates for the latitudinarian scheme, which is so much the idol of the present day, against all who dare open a mouth in defence of such a church communion as is necessary for the maintaining of a faithful public profession of the truths and ordinances of Christ.

It is also of importance to know, that, though the degeneracy of the church was begun in the time of the Novatians, and was much farther advanced in the time of the Donatists; yet the fathers had not then become so indifferent to the profession of the truth, which they had attained, as they are supposed to have been, by those who plead for this lax scheme of church communion. Even then there were footsteps of the flock, which we ought to follow. With regard, however, to the present question, it might have been sufficient to observe, that the communion, which the Novatians and the Donatists opposed in the ancient church, was no example of the catholic communion which is now contended for; it was not a sacramental communion with the avowed and obstinate enemies of any one article of the church's scriptural profession. It cannot be pretended that the lapsed who had become penitent, nor Cecilian, nor any of the churches with which they had communion, were such. Nor did the Novatians or Donatists charge the Catholics with having sacramental communion with such enemies. The charges of these schismatics, as we have seen, were of a very different nature. They did not respect the public profession of

persons admitted to sacramental communion, but their gracious state and their real saintship.

With regard to the obligation of christians to adhere to the communion of a particular church, to that, for example, of Rome or of Africa; Vitringa, in the sixth book of his *Observationes Sacræ*, thinks that Augustine ought to have stated that obligation on christians, as not absolute, but hypothetical; that is, on condition that the church, of which they were members, shall continue in the profession of the truth; and, in his judgement, Augustine's doctrine, as it led men to account the obligation, they were under to adhere to the communion of the Roman church, absolute, was a means of advancing the *man of sin to the throne*, and of his establishment in it. From the view we have taken of the cases of the Novatians and Donatists, it is indeed evident, that there are some expressions in the passages you recited from Cyprian and Augustine, which must be taken *cum grano salis* or with some limitation, to make these fathers consistent with themselves and with the truth.

§ 35. *Alex.* The primitive church did not consider variety of opinion and practice, with respect to the modifications of her external order, as inconsistent with her unity. It appears, that the form of church government gradually altered, so as to become, in process of time, very different from the apostolic establishment. Different opinions prevailed concerning her original order. In the fourth century, when Episcopacy prevailed, contrary sentiments were maintained by Jerome, Aerius and others, with great acceptance among good people. Yet all this variety of opinion and practice, in the matter of church order, did not produce, and therefore was not thought sufficient to warrant, separate communions. Jerome, Aerius, and their adherents, who openly attacked the Episcopacy of their day, as destitute of scriptural or apostolic sanction, did not withdraw on that account, from the fellowship of the Catholic church, and set up, like the Novatians and Donatists, a church of their own. Nor was there any rent in the ancient church on the account of different views and practices with regard to her government.*

Ruf. There seems to have been no great difference of opinion among the fathers concerning church government; if the statements of some, who were good judges and much conversant with the ancient writers, are to be regarded. With respect to the period of the three first centuries of the christian church, Jerome's testimony is sufficient, where he asserts, "That, among the ancients, *Presbyters and Bishops were* "*the same.*"

"Augustine says, that there is no difference of Divine right between "a *Bishop* and a *Presbyter*. Jewel against Harding alleges, that the "same thing is asserted by Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, Theodoret, "Sedulius, Theophylact; and Aerius seems to have asserted, not only "that there was no difference of Divine right between a *Bishop* and a "*Presbyter;* but also that, in his time, there was not any essential "difference between them introduced as yet, by any ecclesiastical "law. In ordination, said Aerius, the bishop lays his hand on the "head of the person ordained; so does the presbyter. In the govern-"ment of the church the bishop sits in the throne of judgement; so

* Plea, &c. pages 76, 97, 98.

"does the presbyter. And this opinion of Aerius, Epiphanius, his "opponent, could not and did not deny. And, no doubt, the writings "of Aerius, if they were extant, would have given us a fuller enume-"ration of those things, which, in his time, were common to bishops "and presbyters, even by ecclesiastical law;"* and would have shewn, how the bishops aspired to far greater power, than either the Divine or ecclesiastical law allowed them. Many ancient churches were governed by presbyters without a Diocesan bishop. The ministers of the African church in the fifth century, though called *Bishops*, were so numerous, that their charges could not be more extensive than those of Presbyterian ministers in our day. Thorndike,† a minister of the church of England, acknowledges, that the Bishops in Africa were so plentiful, that every good village must needs have been the seat of an Episcopal church. In Augustine's time, says Bishop Burnet,‡ there were about five hundred bishopricks in a small tract of ground: these could be no more than pastoral charges. In Ireland, Clarkeson‖ shews by quotations from Bernard and Baronius, that there were nearly as many bishops as churches or houses appropriated to public worship. Palladius was the first Diocesan bishop in Scotland according to an account of Prosper annexed to Eusebius' Chronicle. Before him, says Joannes Major, "the Scots were instructed in the faith by priests and "monks without bishops."§ Thus, among many of the fathers, and in the churches of Africa, Scotland and Ireland, there seems to have been no variety of opinion or practice as to church government before the year 430, when Palladius was sent into Scotland.

§ 36. Farther, it appears that the witnesses for the Divine right of parity among all the ministers of the word and sacraments, and against the superiority of the office of a bishop to that of other ministers, began in the fourth or fifth century to maintain their cause in the way of separation; while the antichristian apostacy was hastening to its height. On account of the episcopal government, praying for the dead, the observation of set fasts, and the like corruptions, it is probable, says Mr. Calderwood, that Aerius made secession from the Roman church.¶ His principles, as Mr. Haweis observes, roused an host of enemies. The reproach of his falling into Arianism, though often repeated, appears to be groundless. This imputation is supported by the authority of Epiphanius only, who is generally allowed to have

* Nullam esse jure Divino inter Episcopum et Presbyterum differentiam, Augustinus dicit, Epist. 19. Jewellus contra Hardingum allegat veteres idem asserentes, Chrysostom, Hieronymum, Ambrosium, Theodoretum, Sedulium, Theophylactum. Puto, Aerium, asseruisse, non solum nullum esse jure Divino differentiam inter Episcopum et Presbyterum; sed etiam nullam de facto hactenus ipsius ætate introductam differentiam essentialem. Imposuit manus Episcopus, imponit et Presbyter: Sedet Episcopus in throno, sedet et Presbyter, inquit Aerius; et hoc negare non potuit Epiphanius. Et procul dubio si extarent scripta Aerii, pleniorem accepissemus enumerationem eorum quæ communia erant sua ætate episcopis et presbyteris etiam jure ecclesiastico. Altare Damascenum, page 204, 205.

† Right of Churches, p. 153. ‡ Conferences, p. 348. ‖ Primitive Episcopacy, p. 40.

§ Per sacerdotes et monachos sine episcopis Scoti in fide erudiebantur. These ministers were called monks, not in the Popish sense, but on account of the strictness of their lives, and their frequent retirement for devotion, as far as it consisted with the public work of the ministry.

¶ Secessionem ob multas coruptelas in ecclesiam irrepentes fecisse probabile est. Altare Dæmas, page 203.

been too credulous with respect to reports, and who was remarkably attached to the superstitious customs against which Aerius bore an open and faithful testimony. It is much against the truth of this charge, that no such thing is mentioned by the ecclesiastical historians, Theodoret, Socrates, Evagrius, or Sozomen. The same testimony against diocesan episcopacy, was afterwards maintained by the Waldenses and Albigenses in a state of separation from the Roman church.

The Waldenses and those, who succeeded them in the same profession of religion, maintained, that in the church of Christ bishops and presbyters were *one* and the *same*,* and that degrees in the ministry, is the image of the beast described in the Revelation. Ramerius of Pisa, a Papist and an enemy to these witnesses, who wrote about the year 1250, acknowledges, that this sect was spread about every where through the world, and had been of a long duration, having, according to some, continued from the time of Pope Sylvester, or from the reign of Constantine, and, according to others, from the days of the apostles.† The same testimony was maintained by Wickliff in England and his adherents. In Paul's time, said they, two orders of clergymen were thought enough for the church, viz. priests and deacons: the other degrees are the inventions of imperious pride.‡ They wholly rejected all human rites and new shadows or traditions. The same doctrine was held by John Hus and his followers. Æneas Sylvius, speaking of the Hussites, says, "One of the dogmas of this pestiferous sect," so the Papists termed these faithful witnesses, "is, That there is no difference of order among those who bear the priestly office."

The Bohemians, in their confession of faith, declare, "That it is necessary for the church to have pastors learned and exemplary in their conduct, as well to preach God's word, as to administer the sacraments, and watch over the sheep of Jesus Christ, together with the elders and deacons, according to the rules of good and holy discipline, and the practice of the primitive church."

Here is a large body of witnesses, who continued their testimony against Prelacy, from the *fourth century* to the period of the *Reformation*, in the way of declining sacramental communion with that corrupt body, which arrogated to itself the name of the catholic church. What shall we think of the scheme, which represents all these witnesses as casting themselves, *by the fact of their separation*, out of the true catholic church, out of which there is no hope of salvation? The truth is, all that these witnesses did, in declaring against and withdrawing from the great majority of the visible church in this period, was no more than their duty.

Had such men as Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome, and others acted as faithfully in opposing Prelacy and in endeavouring to restore the scriptural form of church government and worship; they would have

* Docent omnes Presbyteros esse pares, neque unum esse alio potestate superiorem. Vide Usserium de Christianarum Ecclesiarum successione et statu, page 170. It is true, Usher seems to think this account contrary to another, which represents them as holding three offices in the church, viz. those of the bishop, the elder and the deacon. But it is evident that when they spoke of the parity of elders, they meant preaching elders whom they also called bishops; a fact which Usher does not deny.

† Idem, page 210. ‡ Catalog. Test. Tom. 2, page 820.

stood in the gap before the Lord, to avert the tremendous judgements that were then coming on the visible church. On the other hand, the general corruption was encouraged, and the ascendency of the Papal hierarchy hastened, by the sacramental communion of these good men with the avowed and ambitious promoters of that corruption. This culpable inattention to the true interest of the church of Christ, which is not to be excused, more than any other iniquity, by the holy and wise permission and overruling providence of God, contributed to bring his church into that state of darkness and captivity, in which she continued for more than a thousand years. Thus the example of so many eminent christians and ministers in the latter part of the fourth, in the fifth, and sixth centuries continuing in the communion of the Roman church, when it was evident, that she had adopted a system of apostacy, and that she was obstinately determined to persist in it, is so far from being an argument, as many have considered it, against secession from churches obstinate in a course of defection, that it serves *rather* to set the necessity of the secession of the faithful from such churches in a strong and affecting light.

I thought these observations necessary to a right understanding of the sacramental communion which obtained in the ancient church. But with regard to the instances, you have offered, of a variety of opinions and practices therein, they are no precedents for the scheme of catholic communion in question; while they are no instances of any particular church having sacramental communion with avowed and obstinate opposers of what had been adopted by that church as a part of her scriptural profession.

§ 37. *Alex.* What was the condition of God's witnesses for truth during their struggle with Papal Rome, before they came out of her? Until their separation the church of God was in her. If, as you suppose, it be unlawful for christians to participate in the sacramental communion of churches that have things in their constitution and practice, which we must account to be corruption; then no person could lawfully communicate with any of the members of the church of God, while she was in Papal Rome; that is to say, God's own witnesses could not lawfully communicate with his own church.*

Ruf. It is necessary to attend to the distinction between communion with the invisible church of God, and communion with the visible. Communion with the church as invisible or with true christians, having the same interest in Christ, the same spirit, the same faith, can never have any thing sinful in it. But communion with the church as visible is so far sinful: as it is a communion in what is so. After it was evident, that the church of Rome had adopted the Antichristian system, it was always unlawful to have sacramental communion with it. But it does not follow, that there are no members of the church invisible within the verge of her visible communion; or that they have not communion with one another as members of the church invisible.

It is true, there is hardly any church that can justly be called christian which is so corrupt, or with which it is so criminal to have sacramental communion, as the church of Rome. Yet there may be some within the pale of her visible communion, who have a saving interest in Christ, and whose sin, being blotted out, no more deprives their

* Plea, &c. pages 324, 325.

souls of the benefit of the word and ordinances of Christ, still remaining in that church, than Jacob's lie deprived him of the blessing.

I shall only add one observation more on this subject, which is, that as soon as the Roman church became Antichristian, God called his people to come out of her; because they could not be in her communion without partaking of her sins: accordingly, for this reason, many of his people, before the reformation, as we have seen, came out of her. It is not denied, that the call of Providence was louder at the time of the reformation, and that, after the Papists had confirmed their errors and abominations by the decrees of the council of Trent, and after people had better opportunities of knowing the truth and of joining themselves to a purer communion; the guilt and danger of continuing in the communion of the church of Rome was far greater. But it does not follow, either that it was not sinful to continue in her communion before the era of the reformation; or that now there are none of God's people within the precincts of her external communion. Even when Spiritual Babylon is very near her final downfall, the call is given, "Come out of her my people," Rev. xviii. 4.

Alex. Our conversation has been sufficiently protracted in taking a survey of the history of the ancient church. Our enquiry into the principles and approved practice of the Reformed churches with regard to sacramental communion must be reserved for another opportunity.

DIALOGUE VI.

Of the reformation from Popery.....The principles on which our forefathers separated from the church of Rome, contrary to this scheme of catholic communion.....The doctrine of the Reformed churches, concerning the marks of a true church, contrary to this scheme.....How the expression *true church* is to be understood, as it is used in the Confessions of the Reformed churches.....The design of the Confessions of the Reformed churches contrary to this scheme of catholic communion.....Also, the harmony of these Confessions.....An article of the Augsburgh Confession concerning the Lord's supper, considered.....Some words of the Saxon Confession and Luther and Melanchthon, considered.....Several plans of union proposed among the Protestant churches different from this scheme of catholic communion in question.....An account of Calvin's proposal and of the agreement of the churches in Poland.....The communion of the Reformed church of Holland with other Reformed churches, considered.

§. 38. *Ruf.* The Reformation from Popery was a revolution in the state of the church not less, but perhaps more wonderful, than that which took place, when a christian Prince was first raised to the imperial throne. The evils from which the church was delivered by Constantine were more external; but the Reformation was a deliverance from internal corruptions; and manifestly accomplished by means of the word and Spirit of God. The object of the Reformation was, first, to turn men's attention to the original principles upon which the church of Christ was constituted; calling them to try all her doctrines, her modes of worship, and her forms of government, by the holy

scriptures as the supreme rule; and to set aside human authority and traditions: secondly, to retain whatever conformity to the supreme rule the church had attained in doctrine, worship, and government: and, lastly, to make farther progress in reformation.

Alex. This brings to my mind what I proposed at the close of our former conversation; which was to take a view of the principles and practice of the Protestant churches with regard to sacramental communion.

Ruf. I am persuaded, that the scheme of catholic communion pleaded for, is contrary to the principles and approved practice of the Protestant churches; for this persuasion, I shall offer several reasons.

§ 39. The first, that occurs to me, is the inconsistency of this scheme with the secession of these churches from the church of Rome. They separated from the church of Rome on account of her corruptions. Her making human tradition the rule of faith as well as the holy scriptures; her ascribing merit to men's works, and teaching them to trust in them as the ground of their justification before God; her transubstantiation and purgatory; her general faith; these and many other erroneous doctrines maintained in her public profession were considered by our reformers as sufficient to justify their departure from her communion.

In this judgement, Protestants proceeded upon the authority of such passages of scripture as the following: 1 Tim. vi. 3, "*If any man "teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words "of our Lord Jesus, and to the doctrine according to godliness—from "such withdraw thyself.*" 2 Thess. iii, 14, "*If any man obey not our "word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, "that he may be ashamed.*" 1 Tim. iii. 15, "*The house of God, "which is the church of the living God, is the pillar and ground of "truth;*" an expression intimating the duty of the church to exhibit and maintain in her profession the truths revealed in the word of God; as pillars in ancient times exhibited to public view the edicts of rulers that were affixed to them. 2 Tim. i. 13, "*Hold fast the form of sound "words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in "Christ Jesus;*" a command which as it binds every minister to hold fast the form of sound words in his official capacity; so it binds every particular church, as such, to hold it fast in her public profession.

Our Reformers considered corruptions in the worship of God obstinately persisted in as a sufficient reason of separation from the communion of the Popish church; while they believed such religious worship, as was according to the commandments of men, to be vain and false worship; according to Matth. xv. 9, "*In vain do ye worship me, "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.*" While they remembered, that God forbade his people to go up to Bethaven, to join *with*, or *countenance*, the superstitious worship there. Hos. iv. 15, "*Go not up to Bethaven.*" The name of the place had been Bethel, *the house of God;* but now from the worship of idols, it was become Bethaven, *the house of vanity*, his people were not allowed to go up to it, nor to join with the worshippers there (even in what might be accounted lawful,) in swearing, "*The Lord liveth.*" With regard to the government of the church of Rome, both its form and administration were such as could not be warrantably submitted to, as being con-

trary to what is revealed in the word of God, concerning the officers he has appointed in his house; concerning the authority he hath given them; and concerning the exercise of that authority, for the edification, and not for the destruction of his people. The contrariety of her government to the scripture, in each of these respects, have been shewn abundantly by our divines, who have written defences of the Reformation. It is granted by these writers, that any one of the three evils now specified, as it prevailed in that church, would have been a sufficient ground for our secession from it. "These evils," says Turretine, "are so great and dangerous, that if any one of them be found "in any society, which glories in the name of a church, it would be "necessary for us to make secession from it, and to decline its com-"munion."*

Now, supposing one of the Protestant churches to be involved in one or more of these evils, though in a much less degree than that, in which they have prevailed in the church of Rome; and supposing that the ordinary means, or such as the Protestants used with the church of Rome, had been tried for reclaiming such a particular church, without effect; and that, instead of reforming, she had become more obstinate in avowing and justifying her corruptions: the principles of the Reformers, would have led them to withdraw from such a church, and to decline her sacramental communion.†

This appears, from the passages of scripture already mentioned; and others, which they considered as applicable to their secession from the church of Rome.

"They, who put free will," says one of the first reformers, "for "free grace, reason for faith, their own opinions for the mind of the "Spirit; the doctrine of men for the sacred scriptures; who talk of "nothing but the primacy of Peter; do, by such means, delude and "draw away men from the simplicity of the word of God; and, there-"fore, although the professors, who are chargeable with such things, "think themselves the holiest of men, and extirpators of heresy; yet, "we are to avoid them, as pernicious impostors."‡ For whatever opinion is contrary to any article of the sound or scriptural profesion of any church, is contrary to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. The scriptural principle, that christians ought to use no other forms or means of religious worship, than such as God hath appointed in his word, is as truly opposite to crossing in baptism, or any other form or

* Hæc tria ita sunt gravida et periculosa, ut, si unum vel alterum duntaxat in cœta aliquo, qui Ecclesiæ nomine gloriatur, obtineat, necessario ab illo nobis sit secedendum, nec ulla possit cum illo communio coli. De necessaria secessione ab Eccl. Rom. Disput. v. sect. 2.

† Hence, a judicious divine expresses himself, concerning corruption in the worship of God, in the following decisive though guarded manner: "I humbly think," says he, "it may be made evident, that wherever there is any corruption in worship, it is a sufficient ground of separation from communion with the worshippers in their worship, in case they refuse to reform." Mr. Wilson's Defence, &c. page 55, 56.

‡ Qui liberum arbitrium habent pro gratia, rationem pro fide, opiniones pro judicio Spiritus, doctrinas hominum pro scriptura sacra, quibus nihil in ore est nisi primatus Petri. Quæ omnia dementant homines et a verbi Dei simplicitate abducunt: Quare etsi talium rerum professores se omnium sanctissimos putent, et hæreticæ pravitatis (ut loquuntur) extirpatores, cavendi tamen sunt et fugiendi tanquam noxii impostores. Marloratus in 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5.

means of religious worship, devised by men, as to the worship of images, or of the Virgin Mary. The office of *lord Bishop*, is as little to be found in scripture, as that of a Pope. Hence, the Nonconformists in England were sufficiently vindicated, in their withdrawing from the sacramental communion of the established church there, by the reasons which justified their secession from the Romish church.

The errors of the Romish church, Sir, are not peculiar to her: they are such as other churches may fall into. She bears the character of Spiritual Babylon, out of which God's people were called to come, especially on account of her incurable obstinacy in corruption; in which respect, the literal Babylon of old, was a type of her: Jerem. li. 9, "*We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake "her.*" Papal Rome is set up, in the righteous judgement of God, as a tremendous example and warning to other churches, of the danger of apostacy, from any profession of Divine truth which they have attained.

However much less the evils of the Protestant churches may be, than those of the Popish church; yet, if any of them, like that church, apostatize from any part of the public scriptural profession that they had attained; and if they continue obstinate, after the ordinary scriptural means of reclaiming them have been used, it will become at last, the duty of the faithful, to withdraw from their sacramental communion, as well as it was their duty to withdraw from that of the church of Rome.

That our reformers would not have allowed us to have sacramental communion with a particular church, in the case now supposed, appears, from their representation of the evils implied in communicating with the church of Rome; such as, *Dissembling the truth; the appearance of joining with others in the profession of falsehood; partaking of the errors and abominations of the Romish church; the denial of Christ; tempting the patience of God; open rebellion against his commands; offending weak brethren.** Now supposing, that in the public profession of a Protestant church, only one or two of the truths of God's word are denied; and supposing, that Protestant church to be equally obstinate as the church of Rome, in the denial of these truths of God, and in holding some contrary error; the truth so denied being contained, not only in the scripture, but in the matter of her former public profession: it cannot be reasonably denied that, in this case, that church is gone into a course of defection; and that whosoever, after having come to the knowledge of the truth so denied, communicates with her, appears to join with her in her error; declining, in the very act of communicating, the public confession of the contrary truth; and, in such dissimulation, walks not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel; grieves the Spirit of God; and causes the offence or stumbling of weak brethren.

§ 40. *Alex.* The Papists said, that, in separating from the church of Rome, the Protestants left the true church; and did not belong to

* Nemo, cognita semel veritate, vel in Papotu manere, vel ad illum deficere potest sine gravissimis peccatis, quæ cum salute *asustata*, puta, Dissimulatione veritatis, simulatione mendacii, participatione errorum et sordium ecclesiæ Romanæ, Christi abnegatione, tentatione patientiæ Dei, rebellione aperta contra ejus mandata, et Scandalo infirmorum. Turretinus De Necessaria secessione, &c. Disput. vi. sect. 35.

any true church. To repel this charge, it was necessary for our reformers, to determine from the word of God, what constitutes the true church; and to give its distinctive marks; and to shew, that they belonged to it themselves. In doing this, they fixed on such characteristics as are common, even at the present hour, to all the churches of Reformed Christendom, which have not lost the faith of the Trinity and the atonement. These characteristics, are generally summed up in their confessions, under two heads: 1st, The pure doctrine of the gospel: 2dly, The right administration of the sacraments. It is sufficient for the true unity of the church, says the Augsburgh Confession, to agree in the doctrine of the gospel, and the right use of the sacraments. What is meant by the pure gospel, and the due administration of the sacraments, must be ascertained by the confessions of the Protestant churches. We conclude, then, that all the churches of Reformed Christendom, ought to have sacramental communion among themselves.*

Ruf. The Papists are, indeed, very unjust, in their inference, that because the Protestants left the communion of the particular church of Rome, therefore, they left the communion of the Catholic church. Against this opinion, the several confessions of the Protestant churches harmoniously testify. They all agree, that the way in which we are to judge, whether any religious society be a part of the Catholic church, is not by its local situation, nor by its connexion with another religious society; but, by the characteristics which you have mentioned. Your scheme of catholic communion seems, in this respect, to agree with the Papists; while it implies, that though a particular church have these marks, yet, while that church refuses to have sacramental communion with another on account of its corruptions, these marks are not sufficient to prove the former to be a part of the Catholic church of Christ. For you still suppose, that to refuse sacramental communion with a corrupt particular church, for no other reason than because it is corrupt, is to refuse communion with the Catholic church: just as the Papists say, that to refuse the sacramental communion of the particular church of Rome, is to refuse the communion of the Catholic church.

You justly observe, that "what is meant by the pure gospel, and "the right administration of the sacraments, is to be ascertained by "the confessions of the Protestant churches." But if these marks are to be so understood; and if we are to regulate our sacramental communion by them; then, we ought to have no such communion with the avowed and obstinate opposers of any article of these confessions, though it be *non-essential*; especially, if it be an article in which they all harmonize. There are, however, doctrines, in which all these confessions harmonize, which you will hardly allow to be essential; since they are denied by many whom we, in charity, judge to be sincere christians: such as, That Christ is the Son of God, not by his mediatory office, but by eternal generation; that there is a fiducial application of Christ to ourselves, on the single ground of the grant and promise of the gospel, in the nature of saving faith; that God is to be worshipped by no other ways or means, than those which he has appointed in his word; that the infants of regular members of the visible

* Plea, &c. pages 143, 144.

church, ought to be baptised; that ministers ought to be chosen by the suffrages of the church.

According to your catholic scheme, we are bound to have sacramental communion with the avowed and obstinate opposers of such *non-essential* articles; and, consequently, with some to whom it is manifest, that some of these marks, according to the description of them in their confessions, do not agree; and therefore, with whom, according to these marks, we ought not to have sacramental communion. These marks are more fully expressed in the old Scots' Confession of Faith. The first is, "The true preaching of the word of God, as he hath revealed himself unto us, in the writings of the apostles and prophets." The true preaching of the word, is here considered, not only as it is the instituted mean of gathering and constituting the visible church; but as it includes the profession and maintenance of the true doctrine and the true faith. This mark of a true church, includes the judicial assertion of the truth, and the judicial condemnation of the contrary errors by her office-bearers.*

The second note or mark of the church of God, according to that confession, is, "The right administration of the sacraments of Jesus "Christ, which must be annexed unto the word and promise of God, to "seal and confirm the same in our hearts." And, "in order that the "sacraments may be rightly administered, we judge, that two things "are requisite: the one is, that they may be administered by lawful "ministers, whom we affirm to be only they that are appointed to the "preaching of the word, into whose mouth God has put some sermon "of exhortation; they being men lawfully chosen by some church: "the other, that they be administered in such elements, and in such "sort, as God hath appointed: otherwise, we affirm, that they cease "to be right sacraments of Jesus Christ."

The third note or mark of a true church, is, "Ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered, as God's word prescribeth; whereby "vice is repressed, and virtue nourished."

It follows, from these marks, that we are not to have sacramental communion with a church, which is habitually, publicly and obstinately walking contrary to any of them: by consequence, we cannot warrantably have communion with a particular church or her members, who are habitually, publicly and obstinately opposing any one article of our public scriptural profession; who are displaying a banner against some doctrine or command of Christ, which it belongs to the character and duty of his true church to maintain; or who are exercising their ecclesiastical authority to the wounding and hurt, instead of the edification, of his body.

You say, that these characteristics are *common at this hour* to *all* the churches of Reformed Christendom; excepting such as have lost the faith of the Trinity or the atonement. I confess, that any information I have attained on that subject, does not lead me to form so flattering an opinion of the present state of these churches. Above seventy years since, a pious and judicious writer† shewed, that the

* See the Postscript to Mr. Wilson's Letter, concerning Secession, &c.

† See Mr. Wilson's Defence of the Reformation Principles of the church of Scotland; particularly in the Postscript to his Letter to a Member of the Prebytery of Dumfermline.

national church of Scotland, as then represented by her judicatories, had not a just claim to these notes of a true church of Christ: and I cannot say, I have, as yet, learned, that there is a *real* reformation of that church, with respect to those evils, which led to that conclusion.

Arminian, and other false doctrine, is still propagated in the Protestant churches. This is likely to be the case, while the influence of opinions in favour of the catholic scheme of church communion, incapacitates the churches for giving any effectual check to the progress of error, by the faithful exercise of discipline.

§ 41. I may observe, that the marks of a true church, as including the principles of the Reformation, harmoniously stated in their confessions, hold forth, not only what, in a lax sense, may be called a *true church;* but one which, as to the general tenor of her doctrine and administration, is sound and pure: a church, which is not only opposed to assemblies of heathen idolaters, or unbelieving Jews, or to such as have lost the faith of the Trinity and the atonement; but to churches which, as Turretine says,* are *true churches*, though they are not to be *reckoned pure*.

The obstinate attachment of such corrupt churches to their *wood*, *hay* and *stubble*, may render it necessary to withdraw from their sacramental communion, and to endeavour to preserve the ordinances of God pure and entire in a separate society. Such a society, having the marks of a true church, according to these confessions, is indeed a *true church*, to which we ought to join ourselves. Nor, in this case, is our declining to have communion with a corrupt Protestant church, which obstinately refuses to be reclaimed, any more inconsistent with our relation to the catholic church, than our declining to have such communion with the church of Rome.

Alex. The Belgick Confession, i. e. the Confession of the Protestant Calvinists, in the United Provinces, in 1561, thus lays down their faith respecting the church. We believe and confess one catholic or universal church; which is the true congregation of all faithful christians. We believe that, since there is no salvation out of it, no person, of whatever rank or dignity, may withdraw himself therefrom, so as to live separately, contented with his own custom only. But, on the contrary, that all are bound to join themselves to this assembly, and carefully to preserve the unity of the church; and freely submit themselves to her doctrine and discipline, bowing their neck to the yoke of Christ.—It is the duty of all believers, to disjoin themselves from those who are without the church, and to join themselves to this assembly and congregation of the faithful, wheresoever God has settled it. Whoever, therefore, forsakes that true church, or do not join themselves to it, resist the commandment of God.

The marks, by which the true church is known, are the pure preaching of the gospel; the legitimate administration of the sacraments, according to the command of Christ; and ecclesiastical discipline, for the coercion of vice. It is a church which adjusts all things to the rule of God's word; rejects whatever is contrary to it, and acknowledges Jesus Christ as her only Head. By these marks, the true

* Institutione Theologiæ. Loc. xviii. Quæst. 12. sect. 7.

church, from which it is not lawful for any one to separate himself, may be certainly known.*

Ruf. This is agreeable to what I have observed, that a church, which exhibits the marks of a true church of Christ, though imperfect, has attained, through the goodness of God, such a measure of conformity to the pattern of his word in doctrine, worship and government, that, compared with a corrupt or backsliding church, and with regard to her ruling character, she may be justly called a pure church; and that, in joining ourselves and adhering to the communion of such a church, even when separating from a more numerous body, on account of prevailing defection, we do not separate from the catholic or universal church; but adhere to it more closely than we would do, by continuing in the communion, and conniving at the evils of the more numerous body.

Alex. Rufus, you mistake the meaning of the Belgick Confession; for, according to that Confession, it is the duty of every one, who loves the Lord Jesus, to hold communion with the catholic church, through the medium of any one of her branches, to which he may have access, in any part of the world. If there be but a *true church*, that is enough to justify his participation of her ordinances; and, if she be the *only* true church there, to render such participation, his bounden duty. It is true, the Confession does speak of the preaching of the gospel in a true church being pure; of the administration of the sacraments being according to the command of Christ; of her discipline being sincere and faithful; and of every thing being reduced to the rule of God's word; and of her rejection of every thing contrary to it: but this must be understood, not so much of the actual attainment of scriptural perfection, by any churches whatever, as of their avowed standard; of the test, to which they submit their *pretensions*; and of their *substantial character*; whatever, in other respects, might be their failings or differences. The Belgick churches themselves had not then, and have not since, arrived at such purity as their own confessions, according to certain expressions separately taken, seem to require: and they did not intend to say, that they had not themselves true churches, and were unworthy of communion with others.†

Ruf. With regard to the avowed standard, or test to which churches submit their *pretensions*; an acknowledgment of the holy scriptures, as the standard and test of religious truth is, no doubt, necessary to the character of a true church of Christ. But this cannot be justly considered a sufficient ground for the denomination of a true church of Christ, without any consideration of what conformity to the scriptures she has attained, in particular articles of doctrine and worship: otherwise, even those churches which have lost the faith of the Trinity and the atonement, may be allowed to be true churches.

You say, that this description, in the Belgick Confession, of true churches of Christ, as churches whose doctrine, worship and discipline are adjusted to the rule of God's word, is to be understood as their *substantial character*; that is, as applicable to churches so corrupt, that they have nothing more in respect of their public profession to entitle them to the character of churches of Christ, than their holding such doctrines as are absolutely necessary to be known and believed,

* Plea, &c. pages 148, 149, 150. † Id. pages 152, 154.

in order to salvation, or what you call the essentials. But, though I own that such churches may be called, in a large sense, true churches; I am far from thinking, that it is the design of the Belgick Confession, in the passage under consideration, to describe such churches. For, in the first place, a church, having what you call the essentials, may be, as to the habitual and prevailing state of religion in it, the reverse of that which is described in the words of the Confession in this place: her doctrine may be corrupted by a mixture of error; her worship, by what is taken away from, or added to the Divine institutions; and her government may be tyrannical; and she may be continuing obstinate in these evils, after all ordinary means have been used to reclaim her. And her persisting in these evils may be peculiarly heinous and aggravated, as being an apostacy from great purity in doctrine, worship and government, formerly attained. Now, it is unwarrantable, to suppose, that this passage of the Belgick Confession, giving particular characters of that church of Christ to which we ought to join ourselves, should mean, that we are bound to join ourselves to a church of a contrary description.

The unreasonableness of this construction is more evident from what is added, in the same article of that confession, concerning the false church, from which we are to depart; "a church that sets the authori-"ty of its own constitutions above that of God's word; that refuses "to submit to the yoke of Christ; that does not administer the sa-"craments according to Christ's appointment." It is true, that by the false church here, the compilers of the confession immediately intended the church of Rome, which was the principal erroneous church, that our Reformers had to contend against. But they certainly meant, that the same evils in whatever church they might be found, would make her character so far as they prevailed, in her, differ from that of the true church of Christ. To the same purpose are the following words of the Confession of the cities of Argentor, Constance, Memingen, and Lindau. "They cannot bear the character of the church "of Christ who teach what is contrary to the commands of Christ. "Though they may be within the church; yet, being entangled in er-"ror, the sound of the Shepherd's voice is not heard in them: they "cannot represent the church, the spouse of Christ."*

In the second place, though the Belgick Confession, in this passage, does not direct us to seek a perfect church on earth; yet it certainly directs us to seek a pure or faithful church; a church which is endeavouring to hold fast all the reformation already attained; and which does not refuse to be reformed more and more. In this light they certainly considered all their own churches; and the other reformed churches with which they had communion. They considered them as in a state of progressive reformation, not in a state of progressive defection. There is nothing in the words of this Confession implying, that it is our duty to have sacramental communion with a church which is in a state of progressive defection; or that our declining sacramental communion with such a corrupt church and our adhering to a church bearing testimony against such defection, is a separation from the catholic or universal church, out of which there is no salvation.

* Cap. 15. de Ecclesia.

I add only one remark, which is, that what this Confession says of the true church, must here be understood of her actual attainment; for we cannot judge, whether a church be true or false, pure or corrupt, but by what she has actually attained. On the whole, it is evident, that the principles on which the Protestant churches left the church of Rome, and the marks of a true church of Christ stated in their Confessions, are altogether inconsistent with the scheme of catholic communion now pleaded for.

§ 42. The second reason, I offer, for my persuasion, that the scheme of catholic communion is contrary to the principles of the Reformed churches, arises from the design of their Confessions and from the harmony of their doctrines. It was the design of these Confessions, not only as has been just now observed, to shew, that these churches bear the marks or characters of true churches of Jesus Christ; but to serve as bonds of union among their members, and as tests of soundness in the faith, and means of keeping the erroneous out of their communion.

"It was the design of these Confessions," says Turretine, "that "they might be forms of agreement and serve as a bond of salutary "union, in which all the pious might coalesce into one body, and that "they might be means of preventing animosities, dangerous dissen-"sions and schisms tending to deprive the church both of truth and uni-"ty."*

He adds, "That they serve to guard against the introduction of "dangerous novelties, which corrupt the simplicity of the faith and "disturb the peace of the church."† The obligation, which these Confessions were intended to have on church members, is defined in the following words of Spanheim: "These Confessions," says he, "oblige all, in respect of the conscience, no otherwise than hypotheti-"cally, on account of the agreement of their doctrine with the holy "scriptures, on account of the manifestation of the truth in them to "every conscience, 2 Corinth. iv. 2. Not as they are the words of men, "but as they are the words of God, 1 Thess. ii. 13. But all the mem-"bers of the same society are fellow labourers in the same ministry "and in the same church, in the English church, for example, in the "Dutch, in the Helvetian, &c. are under an absolute obligation to the "Confessions or forms of doctrine adopted by their respective socie-"ties or churches, as external or ecclesiastical bodies; as the stand-"ards of what they have agreed to in the matters of faith, as the foun-"dations of their external church union, as remedies against schisms; "as justly deduced, according to the public judgement of the church, "from the holy scriptures, the only principle and supreme standard "of the doctrines of religion; not, however, precluding any person "from the private examination or trial of these Confessions by the

* Ut essent formulæ consensus, et unionis salutaris vinculum, quo pii omnes in unum corpus coagmentarentur, et sic omnes distractiones, periculosi dissensus et schismata, quibus veritas et unitas Ecclesiæ laceratur, præcaverentur. De Potestate Eccl. Quæst. 30. Sect. 8.

† Ad præcavendas periculosas novitates, quæ fidei simplicitatem inficire poterant, et pacem Ecclesiæ turbare. Ibid. Sect. 12.

"touch-stone of the Divine word, in order to farther confirmation in "the faith."*

According to this design, every article of a scriptural Confession, which a particular church, has adopted, essential or non-essential, belongs to the bond of union among her members, and to the test of soundness in the faith. But if a particular church, or her members, have sacramental communion with the public and obstinate opposers of any article of such a Confession; that church and her members, in doing so, declare that such an article is no more any bond of their union. For it cannot be shewn, that the members of any particular church may warrantably have an article of a Confession of Faith, as a bond of union among themselves, which ought not to be so between them and all christians with whom they may warrantably communicate. Nor can any article of a Confession adopted by any particular church; while that church has sacramental communion with the open and obstinate opposers of it, serve in her for a test of soundness in the faith: for, in that case, none can be kept from partaking of sealing ordinances, nor consistently subjected to any censure, for rejecting it, or holding doctrine contrary to it.

Our Reformers, no doubt, allowed some articles of their Confessions to be more important and to lie nearer the foundation of our holy religion, than others; but that it consisted with their design, in framing and publishing their Confessions to the world, that a great part of them should not be considered, as belonging to the necessary bond of their ecclesiastical union, or to the test of soundness in the faith, in due subordination to the holy scriptures, I have not, as yet, seen any ground to believe.

§ 43. Conformable to this design is the harmony of these Confessions. It is delightful to observe their agreement with the holy scriptures, and with one another. One cannot fail to have this satisfaction in comparing these Confessions with one another, on the following subjects; on the holy scriptures; on human tradition; on the Holy Trinity; on the Providence of God; on the person of Christ and his relation to the church as her only Head; on the justification of a sinner before God; on the fiducial nature of faith; on repentance and good works; on predestination and free will; on the sacraments; on the church and her ministers; on the resurrection and eternal life.

Hence it appears, that the sacramental communion, which the Reformed churches had at first with one another on the ground of their Confessions, could be no example of the catholic communion now pleaded for; that is, it was no example of any of them having such communion with the avowed and obstinate opposers of any scriptural doctrine, essential or non-essential, of their public profession.

Alex. According to these Confessions, differences as to rites, ceremonies, modifications of external order, ought not to hinder churches,

* Formulæ publicæ sane omnes obligant etiam in foro interno sed non aliter quam ex hypothesi ab doctrinæ homosephian cum scripturis sacris ob *anerosin* in iis ventatis *pros pasan suneidesin*, 2 Corinth. iv. 2, nec ut sunt verbum hominum, sed ut sunt verbum Dei, 1 Thes. ii. 13. Ast vero membra omnia ejusdem societatis et *sunergous* in eodem ministerio, eademque ecclesia, puta, Anglicana, Batava, Helvetica, &c. obligant formulæ doctrinæ absolute, in foro externo, seu civilis eu ecclesiastico; nempe, ut normæ consensus, ut fundamentum unionis, ut remedia schismatum, ut quæ censentur judicio publico deductæ ex principio unico scripturæ: non excluso tamen cujusque examine, et *anakrisei* privata et *sungkrisei* ad lapidem Lydiam verbi Divini.

which hold the main doctrines of faith, from having sacramental communion with one another. To this purpose, the Augsburgh Confession: "The unity of the catholic church, consists in the harmony of doctrine "and faith; not in human traditions, whereof there has always been "in the churches great diversity."*

The Bohemian Confession: "The face and form of our church, "which are now peculiar, are retained for no other reason, than greater "convenience in teaching the word, administering the sacraments, and "for the exercise of discipline. A variety of ceremonies, if they be "not repugnant to the word of God, neither does harm to the word of "God, nor separates from the church."†

The Helvetian: "The truth and unity of the church, consists not "in ceremonies and external rites; but rather in the truth and unity "of the catholic faith. The catholic faith has not been delivered to "us in human laws, but in the Divine scriptures. The churches have "always used their liberty in such rites, as being indifferent. And we "do the same at this day."‡

The subscribers to the Helvetian Confession, thus express themselves in their preface: "Impartial readers will clearly perceive, that "we have no communion with any sects or heretics, which, for this "very end, we mention and repeat in almost every chapter. They "will therefore infer also, that we do not, by any nefarious schism, "separate and rend ourselves from the holy church of Christ in Ger-"many, France, England, and other christian nations; but, that we "thoroughly agree with each and all of them, in this Confession of "Christ's truths, and embrace them in unfeigned love. And although "there be discovered, in different churches, a certain variety of ex-"pression and form of explaining doctrine; as also, of rites or cere-"monies according to the received usage, convenience and edification "of particular churches; yet they will notice that these things never "furnished, in any period of the church, ground of dissensions and "schisms. The churches of Christ, as ecclesiastical history shows, "have always used their liberty in this matter. Pious antiquity ac-"counted mutual agreement in the principal doctrine of faith, and in "brotherly love sufficient."‖ The rest of the preface is in the same strain.

This Confession, was officially addressed in the preface to christians and christian churches, throughout Europe; and was approved by the churches of England, Scotland, France, the United Provinces, and by many of Poland, Hungary and Germany. Now, in these churches, there was a great variety of religious observances, as well as differences of a higher order. Some of them, as the Dutch and Germans, were Calvinists in doctrine, and Presbyterians in government: others, as the English, were Episcopal; and others again, as the German, a sort of medium between Episcopacy and Presbytery.

To the same purpose, are the following words of the Saxon Confession drawn up in the year 1551. "In the mean time, there have been, "and are, and will be, in the church of God, men holding the founda-"tion, who have had, and will have, some more, and some less, light:

* Plea, &c. pages 154, 155. † Ib. pages 155, 156.

‡ Ib. pages 159, 160. ‖ Ib. pages 160, 161.

"and, sometimes, saints too build stubble upon the foundation; since, "especially in the wretchedness of the present times, many who have "the beginnings of faith, have not the privilege of being instructed, "and of conferring with those who are more skilful. These, however, "are in the number of those, whom, it is the will of God, we should "spare; who groan and grieve, because errors are established. A "judgement, therefore, must and may be formed, what and where is "the true church, by the voice of true doctrine, and the legitimate use "of the sacraments; and what the voice of true doctrine is, the very "writings of the apostles and prophets, and the creeds, sufficiently "declare. In these, there is no ambiguous doctrine, concerning the "foundation; that is, concerning the articles of faith, the essence and "will of God, the Son our Redeemer, the law, the promises, the use of "the sacraments, the ministry."*

How severely does the Helvetian Confession condemn separation from the true church of Christ! "We lay so great stress," says that Confession, "upon communion with the true church of Christ, as to "deny that they can live before God, who do not communicate with "the true church of God, but separate themselves therefrom."†

In short, these extracts from the Confessions of the reformed churches, shew, that they contended, 1st, for liberty in rites and ceremonies of worship; 2ndly, for mutual forbearance in the article of church government; 3dly, for latitude in the forms of doctrinal expression, provided the substance of evangelical truth be preserved; so as that diversity in any or all these things, shall not break up the peace of the churches, nor hinder sacramental communion; and 4thly, for concord, communion and love between them, upon the basis of their unity in that faith and doctrine, to which they all look for their common salvation.‡

Ruf. The expressions in these Confessions, respecting the evil of separating from the true church of God, taken abstractedly, are not to be understood of any particular visible church, but of the *catholic church.* This is the *church*, out of the communion of which we cannot live before God. This is what the Belgick Confession calls, the true congregation or assembly of all faithful christians, who expect their whole salvation from Jesus Christ alone; as they are washed in his blood, and sanctified and sealed by his Spirit. It is not like a particular church, as that Confession observes, limited to one particular place, but is dispersed through the whole world. The Papists held the particular church of Rome, to be the catholic or universal church. Protestants, on the contrary, always taught that no society of professing christians, who had the marks, formerly mentioned, of a true church of Christ, was separated from the catholic church.

With respect to rites and ceremonies, there is much harmony in their Confessions.

In the Belgick Confession, we have these words: "Though it be "good and useful for the church rulers to agree on, and settle, some "certain order for the conservation of the body of the church; yet, "they ought to guard, with the utmost care, against swerving from "those things, which Christ our Master has instituted. Wherefore, "we reject all human inventions, and all laws, which may be intro-

* Plea, &c. pages 157, 158. † Ib. page 158. ‡ Ib. page 162.

"duced by any to bind the conscience with regard to the worship of "God."*

The same doctrine is taught more largely in some of the other confessions; particularly, in the Saxon, which was drawn in 1551. "Ways of worship," says that Confession, "devised by men, without "the command of God, never were nor are the worship of God. God "is far from approving the presumption, so common among men, of "inventing methods of worship, that is. works which have it for their "immediate end, that God, through them, may receive religious wor-"ship. Hence, he exclaims, *In vain do they worship me according "the commandments of men.* This presumption is every where re-"proved in the prophets and in Paul. But the acts of true religious "worship, are acts or services which God hath commanded. Thus, "God still directs us to his commands as our warrant in this matter: "saying, as in Ezek. xx. *Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers; "but walk in my statutes.* And in Psal. cxix. *Thy word is a lamp to "my feet.*†

"The church of Christ," says the Confession of the church of Basil, "uses all her endeavours to preserve the bonds of peace and love in "unity; and therefore she has nothing to do with sects, and rules of "the Popish orders about the distinction of days, meats, vestments "and ceremonies."‡

In the Confession presented to the emperor Charles the fifth, by the embassadors of the cities of Argentor, Memmingen, Constance and Lindau, in 1530, we have the following passage: "The human tradi-"tions, which the churches consider as condemned in scripture, are "those only which they find inconsistent with the law of God; such "as those binding men's conscience to the observation of certain meat, "drink, or times; or forbidding to marry. But those which are con-"sonant to scripture and good morals, and are for the benefit of men, "and which, though they are not expressed in so many words in scrip-"ture, yet flow from the *law of love* which enjoins all things to be "done decently, may be reckoned *rather* Divine than human. Such "are these traditions of Paul: that the women should not pray in the "church with their heads uncovered; nor the men with their heads "covered; that when they were going to communicate, they should "wait for one another; that no one should speak in an unknown "tongue in the public assemblies without an interpreter; that the pro-"phets should speak in order without interrupting one another."‖

* Credimus, quamvis utile et bonum sit, Gubernatores Ecclesiæ ordinem aliquem certum inter se, ad conservationem corporis Ecclesiæ instituere et stabilere; debere tamen eos studiose cavere ne ab iis deflectant, quæ Christus unicus Magister noster constituit. Quapropter rejicimus omnia inventa humana, omnesque leges pro cultu Dei a quo cunque introduci possunt, ut iisdem conscientæ ullo omnino modo devinciantur. Belgick Confession, art. xxxii.

† At ethelothreskeiai excogitatæ ab hominibus sine mandato Dei, nec fuerunt, nec sunt cultus Dei. Nequaquam probat Deus audaciam hominum, qui tamen semper usitate fuit, fingendi cultus, id est opera quorum finis immediatus sit, ut Deus per ea honore adficiatur. Ideo exclamat, &c. Sed veri cultus sunt opera a Deo mandata, &c. Conf. Saxonica De ritibus in ecclesia institutis.

‡ Christi Ecclesia cum sectis et ordinum regulis, ad discrimen dierum, ciborum, vestium et ceremoniarum compositis, nullomodo communicat. Confess. Basilgensi. art. v.

‖ Inter traditiones quæ in Scripturis damnantur, nullas numerant, nisi quæ cum lege Dei pugnant, quales sunt quæ de cibo, &c. Confess Argentinensi, cap. 14.

"With regard to ecclesiastical rites," says the Augsburgh Confession, written by Melanchthon, in 1530, "which are instituted by human authority, our churches teach, that such of them are to be observed, as may be observed without sin; such as are conducive to tranquillity and good order in the church; as some holy days, some pious songs. These, however, are to be considered as things indifferent, which, out of the case of scandal or offence, may be omitted."*

This Confession says farther concerning such observances: "They do not belong to that religious worship which is necessary. Christ forbids human ceremonies to be considered as worship. He does not forbid the retaining of such traditions for a political end; that is, for the sake of good order: but he denies that they are worship, when he says, *In vain do they worship me.*"†

"We confess," says the Wirtemberg Confession, which was drawn up in 1552, "that the bishops, with the consent of their church, may appoint orders of holy days, and of lectures or sermons for edification, and for the teaching of the true faith in Christ. But it is not lawful to restore the ancient rites of the law, or to devise new ones to signify some truth already set forth in the gospel; such as the lighting of wax candles in daylight to signify the light of the gospel; or using crosses on banners to signify the victory of Christ by the cross."‡

From these quotations it appears, that the confessions of the Reformed churches harmoniously teach, that no church ought to admit as parts of religious worship any rites or ceremonies not appointed in the word of God, or to impose religious significations on them.

The statement of the Belgick and Saxon Confessions is perfectly adjusted to this principle. As to what some of these confessions say about holy days and pious songs introduced by men into the public worship of the church, though the retaining of them be a real deviation from this principle, it is no designed contradiction of it; while these usages are not stated as necessary parts of religious worship, and while there is no opposition intended to the other confessions. So that we find nothing in the confessions of the reformed churches, concerning rites and ceremonies, in favour of the catholic communion now contended for: that is, in favour of the practice of sacramental communion with avowed and obstinate opposers of any article, essential or non-essential, of our public scriptural profession.

There is no less harmony in the doctrine of these confessions with regard to church government. They never represent a bishop as having greater or any other power than that of an ordinary pastor or minister of the church.

* De ritibus ecclesiasticis qui sunt humano auctoritate instituti, docent, &c. Confess. Aug. art. 15.

† Tales observationes sunt res adiaphoræ, quæ extra scandali casum omitti possunt: non sunt necessarii cultus. Christus vetat humanas cæremonias habere pro cultibus. Non enim prohibet condere traditiones ad finem politicum, hoc est, propter bonum ordinem, sed cultus esse negat, cum ait, *Frustra colunt me.* Confess. Aug. De Discrimine Ciborum et similibus Traditionibus Pontificiis.

‡ Fatemur hoc quod Episcopus liceat cum ecclesiæ suæ consensu ordinationes, &c. Confess. Wirtemberg. De cæremoniis ecclesiasticis.

The Augsburgh Confession says, "It is our judgement, that the "power of the keys, or that of the bishop according to the gospel, is "the authority or command of God to preach the gospel, to remit or "retain sins, and to administer the sacraments: for Christ sends the "apostles with this charge; *As my Father hath sent me, so I send you.* "*Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are* "*remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retain-* "*ed. Go, preach the gospel to every creature.* This authority is ex- "ercised in teaching or preaching the gospel, and in dispensing the "sacraments. According to the gospel, or as they speak, *de jure di-* "*vino*, no jurisdiction belongs to bishops, that is, to them to whom "the ministry of the word and sacraments is committed, but that of "remitting sins; and also, that of discerning the true doctrine, and "of rejecting such doctrine as is different from that of the gospel, and "of excluding persons, whose impiety is known, from the communion "of the church."*

The truth is thus expressed in the Helvetian Confession: "The "authority, or office given to all the ministers in the church, is one "and equal. It is certain, that, in the beginning, the bishops and "presbyters governed the church by common consent and labour. "No one preferred himself to another; none usurped greater authori- "ty or power over his fellow bishops; for they remembered the words "of the Lord, *He who will be chief among you, let him be your ser-* "*vant.* Jerome says, That bishops were above presbyters rather by "custom, than by any real Divine appointment. Such was his judge- "ment. None, therefore, can justly prohibit us from returning to the "Divine appointment, and from receiving it as preferable to a human "custom."†

The Belgick Confession is abundantly explicit on this head: "We "believe," says that form of sound words, "that the church ought to "be governed by that scriptural polity, which God hath taught us in "his word; that is, that there should be ministers or pastors in it to "preach the word of God, and to administer the sacraments; and that "there should be seniors or elders and deacons; who, with the pastors "may constitute what may be called the senate of the church. We "believe, that the ministers, elders, and deacons ought to be chosen "to their several functions by the legitimate election of the church, "with calling on the name of the Lord, and in that order which is "taught in the word of God. As to the ministers of the Divine word, "they have the same power and authority, as being all alike ministers "of Christ, the only universal Bishop and Head of the church."‡

* Nostri sentiunt, potestatem clavium seu potestatem Episcoporum juxta Evangelium potestatem esse, seu mandatum Dei, prædicandi Evangelii, remittendi et retinendi peccata, et administrandi sacramenta. Nam cum hoc mandato Christus mittit apostoles, Joannis xx. 21, 22, 23. Marci xvi. 15. Hæc potestas tantum exercetur docendo seu prædicando Evangelium, et porrigendo sacramenta. Augustana Confessione de Potestate Ecclesiastica.

† Data est omnibus in Ecclesia ministris una et æqualis potestas, vive functio. Certe ab initio Episcopi et Presbyteri ecclesiam communi opera gubernaverint. Nullus alteri se prætulit, &c. Helvet. Conf. Chap. 18. De ministris Ecclesiæ ipsorumque institutione et officio.

‡ Art. 30, 31.

To the same purpose are the words of the Gallic Confession presented to Charles IX, king of France in 1566. "We believe, that "the true church ought to be governed with that polity or discipline "which our Lord Jesus Christ ordained, viz. that there should be in "it pastors, elders, and deacons. We believe, that all true pastors, "wherever they are placed, have the same and equal authority under "Jesus Christ, the supreme and only universal Bishop."*

Thus, there appears to be so much harmony in the Confessions of the Reformed churches with regard to government; that they might have sacramental communion with one another upon the ground of these Confessions, without admitting to that communion any avowed and obstinate opposers of their scriptural profession on this head.

§ 44. *Alex.* Is not the article of the Augsburgh Confession in relation to the presence of our Saviour's body and blood in or with the sacramental bread and wine, an exception to the harmony of these Confessions?

Ruf. I shall recite to you the account given of this article by Bernhardinus de Moor in his commentary on Mark's Compend. This Confession, says he, was presented to the Emperor Charles V, in a diet of the Empire of Augsburgh in 1530. It was drawn up by Melanchthon, who was remarkable for the mildness of his temper, in a style, discovering great, if not too much, anxiety to avoid such terms as would be offensive to the Papists, or might tend to prejudice the Emperor against the Protestants, to the endangering of their peace and liberty. This appeared, particularly, in the terms in which the tenth article, concerning the Lord's supper, was expressed, in the copy delivered to the Emperor. "In the Lord's supper the body and blood of Christ are "present under the species or forms of bread and wine."† As these words approached too near the terms in which the Papists used to express their doctrine of transubstantiation, they were thus altered in the edition printed in 1531: "They teach concerning the Lord's sup-"per, that the body and blood of Christ are truly present therein, and "are distributed to the partakers; and they disapprove of such as "teach otherwise."‡ But in revising, correcting, and enlarging this Confession in the year 1538, Melanchthon expressed the same article in this manner: "Concerning the Lord's supper they teach, that, "with the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, are truly exhibited to "the partakers the body and blood of Christ."|| Here were two variations from the first edition. In the second edition, Christ's body is said to be truly present, and to be distributed in the Lord's supper: in the last, it is only said to be exhibited. The disapprobation in the former edition, of those that teach otherwise, is left out in the latter. But the Lutherans had no sufficient reason for the clamour, which they raised, about their Confession being altered; since this correction does not appear to have been made without the knowledge and consent

* Art. 29, 30.

† Corpus et sanguinem Christi sub specie panis et vini vera adesse in cœna Domini.

‡ De cœna Domini docent, quod corpus et sanguis Christi vera adsint, et distribuantur vescentibus in cœna Domini; et improbant secus docentes.

|| De cœna Domini docent, quod cum pane et vino vere exhibeantur corpus et sanguis Christi vescentibus in cœna Domini.

of Luther, who lived eight years afterward, and never opposed it. On the contrary, the Confession, thus corrected, was approved and received by the most eminent divines, princes, and electors among the Lutherans; and hence it was, that some of these made so much opposition to the Form of Concord agreed on at Berg, in 1577, as adhering too rigidly to what they called *the Confession unvaried*. Besides, consubstantiation is not determinately expressed in this article; even in the first edition; and much less, in that which is altered. For when it was said, that the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the Lord's supper, it may be understood two ways; as meaning, either that they are present spiritually, being offered in the word of promise, and received by faith; or that they are present in a corporal and carnal manner, as included or latent in, with and under the bread and wine. It is not said, whether the eating by those, to whom the body and blood of the Lord are distributed, be oral* or spiritual. It is not said, that what is given in this ordinance to unbelievers is truly the body and blood of Christ; and not rather the bare symbols, without the thing signified. This article therefore may be explained and admitted in a sound sense; in a sense which Luther himself expressed in a popular sermon in the year 1519; namely, "that the union in the "sacrament, between the sign and the thing signified, is not a corpo-"ral union *by local proximity*,* but a spiritual union which is made by "faith, in the use of the sacrament." Hence we may understand how Mr. Calvin and others of the Reformed church came to subscribe the Augsburgh Confession, notwithstanding this article.

On the whole, the harmony of the Confessions of the Reformed churches is such as evinces, that their sacramental communion with one another on the ground of these Confessions, was not a communion with any professed and obstinate opposers of either of these two propositions, That rites and ceremonies, for which there is no other warrant than human authority, do not belong to the true worship of God; and, That there is no legitimate office in the church of God superior to that of the pastor, who is ordained to preach the word and administer the sacraments; nor was it a communion with the professed and obstinate opposers of any of the other doctrines, whether essential or non-essential, that are harmoniously stated, in these Confessions. And it appears from this harmony to have been originally a received principle in these churches, that it was unwarrantable to have sacramental communion with the professed and obstinate opposers of any of those truths, for which in their Confessions they unanimously displayed a banner.

§ 45. *Alex.* You have not taken notice of the words, which I mentioned, of the Saxon Confession, viz. "That there have been, are, and "will be in the church of God, men holding the foundation, who have, "and have had, and will have some more, some less light: sometimes "saints, too, build stubble upon the foundation, some, especially in the "wretchedness of the present times, many, who have the beginnings "of faith, have not the privilege of being instructed, and of conferring "with those who are more skilful. These, however, are in the num-"ber of those whom it is the will of God we should spare, who groan "and grieve on account of established error." You have not consid-

* That is, with our bodily mouth. † Per ADIASTASIAN.

ered the words of the Bohemian Confession, namely, "That, as to "the differences, which may obtain among the churches in external "rites and ceremonies, we think it of no importance; for these vary "among christians according to the variety of place and nation. "Ceremonies change, but faith, Christ, the word change not:" nor have you considered the words of Luther and Melanchthon: "We "ought," says Luther, "to congratulate both the Waldenses, (whose "faith is comprehended in this Confession) and ourselves, that we, "who were far apart, are now, by the destruction of the parting wall "of suspicion, whereby we seemed heretics to each other, brought near "to one another, and gathered into one fold, under that one Shepherd "and Bishop of our souls, who is blessed for ever, amen. But if cer-"tain differences from other churches occur in this Confession of "theirs concerning rites and ceremonies, or celibacy, let us remember, "that all the rites and observances of all the churches, never were, "nor could be, the same. Such an agreement is not permitted by the "various circumstances of men, of time and place: only let the doc-"trine of faith and morals be preserved. For this ought to be the "same, according to Paul's admonition: *Speak*, says he, *all the same "thing:* and again, *that with one mouth ye may glorify the God and "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. For that marriage should be "among them, as it is among us, their condition does not allow. In "the mean time, it is sufficient, that what is lawful to all, is not taught "to be sin to any, and is believed without injury to the faith and con-"science of any one."

Nor have you considered the words of Melanchthon: "Since we "agree in the principal articles of christian doctrine, let us embrace "each other with mutual love: nor ought dissimilitude and variety of "rites and ceremonies to sever our affections. I most earnestly wish, "that those who love the gospel, and desire to glorify the name of "Christ, may not destroy themselves by domestic feuds and discords, "especially on account of things for which it is not necessary to excite "disturbance."*

Ruf. Our conversation on this question will be vain, unless we attend to the true state of it. It is not inquired, whether we may have sacramental communion with any who differ from us in some opinions or customs. In opposing catholic communion, it is not meant, that every such difference should be a bar to sacramental communion: but the question is, whether a professed and obstinate opposition to any article of a scriptural profession, or to any part of that scriptural Reformation, which a church in her ecclesiastical capacity has attained in doctrine, worship or government, be not such a bar. Now, it does not appear, that such opposition is expressed in the Bohemian Confession to any article of the scriptural profession of the Reformed churches. With regard to humanly devised rites and ceremonies, they are not accounted in this, more than in the other confessions, matters of religion or parts of Divine worship.

"Human traditions," say the Bohemians, "are not to be regarded "as inviolable or perpetual laws. But as they were introduced on "certain occasions for good reasons; so on other occasions, suggest-"ing different reasons, they may be violated without sin; as the apos-

* Plea, &c. pages 164, 165, 166, 167.

"tles transgressed the traditions of the elders, when they ate bread "with unwashen hands, and likewise did not fast with others; in both "which cases their conduct was excused by Christ, as being without "sin." They teach, that, when such traditions, rites and ceremonies, are equalled to the Divine commands, they are to be avoided and rejected: the observers of them, in that case, being liable to the censure, which our Lord passed on the observers of the Jewish traditions, *In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**

There seems to be nothing in the passage, you have recited, of the Saxon Confession contrary to the principles we maintain in opposing the scheme of catholic communion now pleaded for. The case of such as build wood, hay and stubble on the foundation with a designed opposition to the truth, after having good opportunity of knowing it, and with obstinacy, after all the ordinary means have been used for their reformation, is carefully to be distinguished from the case of such as do so from the want of light and instruction; discovering a willingness to be reformed. With churches and professors of the former description we judge it unwarrantable to continue to have sacramental communion; but we do not refuse to hold it with those of the latter description; which last is the case referred to in the passage of the Saxon Confession. I am far from saying, that it is necessary to warrantable sacramental communion, that all those who partake of it should have the same degree of knowledge or of faith. It is manifest, that the condition of God's people does not admit of this: they are different in respect of age, some being fathers, and some children; in respect of character, some being teachers, and some taught; and in respect of abilities, some having more discernment in the matters of God than others. But the truth which I believe in opposition to your scheme of catholic communion is, that no particular church, or her members, ought to have sacramental communion with such as openly and obstinately avow their denial and rejection of any one article of her public, scriptural profession.

With regard to the words of Melanchthon, it may be observed, that there is no reason to doubt, that he comprehended more in what he calls "*the principal articles of christian doctrine*," than what you mean by essentials. The Augsburgh Confession, which Melanchthon wrote, bears this title, "The Principal Articles of the Faith,"† Will you say that there is no article in that Confession but what is essential? In the passage you have quoted, it is evident, that he speaks of the articles of christian doctrine in opposition to rites and ceremonies, and things, about which it was not necessary for church members to make a stir, or to trouble themselves. Melanchthon would not have spoken in this manner of any article of his public profession, which he regarded as belonging to the truth of God contained in the holy scriptures. Such expressions, about the points, in which particular churches differ, being fewer and of less importance, than those in which they agree, may be, and have often been used with propriety, in order to promote the christian charity and just esteem, that they ought to have

* Bohem. Confess. art. 15. De traditionibus humanis.

† Articuli fidei præcipui.

for one another; to encourage the hope of farther harmony and union; and to strengthen their joint endeavours to promote their common profession of the truths of God in opposition to seducers. But that the worthy defenders of the Reformation, when they used such expressions, meant to recommend sacramental communion with the avowed and obstinate opposers of any one article of their public and scriptural profession, has not yet been proved.

§ 46. Having considered the design and harmony of the Confessions of the Reformed churches, it is time to proceed to the consideration of another topic which may throw light upon this question. The topic, I mean, is the union of the Protestant churches which Mr. Calvin proposed, and which some of them attempted to carry into effect. What was thus proposed and attempted, was not immediately sacramental communion, but such an union in their public profession and administrations, as was necessary in order to that communion.

Alex. Mr. Calvin proposed an union among the churches in a letter to Cranmer. "I wish," says he, "it could be brought about, that "men of learning and dignity from the principal churches might have "a meeting; and, after a careful discussion of the several points of "faith, might hand down to posterity the doctrine of the scripture, "settled by their common judgement. But amongst the greatest evils "of our age, this also is to be reckoned, that our churches are so dis-"tracted one from another, that human society scarcely flourishes "amongst us; much less that holy communion of the members of Christ, "which all profess in words, and few sincerely cultivate in fact. Thus "it happens, that the body of the church, by the dissipation of its mem-"bers, lies torn and mangled. As to myself, were I like to be of any "service, I should not hesitate to cross the seas for that purpose. If "the question were only concerning giving aid to England, that would "be with me a sufficiently powerful reason. Now, when the object is "to obtain such an agreement of learned men upon strict scriptural "principles, as may accomplish an union of churches in other respects "widely asunder, I do not think it lawful for me to decline any labors "or troubles."*

Ruf. The proposal of Calvin, in his letter to Cranmer, is evidently intended to prevent sacramental communion with the erroneous; for the business of the meeting, he proposes, of pious and learned men was, that the doctrine of the scripture might be settled; that the several articles of that doctrine being thus ascertained, might be a bond of union among the churches; a bond, which was to be preserved inviolate by excluding from their sacramental communion the public teachers and maintainers of the contrary errors. It is evident, that, if the churches left the door open for the entrance of such persons into their communion, those truths, however correctly ascertained by such eminent divines, would neither accomplish the union of these churches, nor be handed down to posterity, according to Calvin's design. That eminent reformer was well persuaded, that union of love among churches and their members depended on union in the belief of the truth; and that the latter ought to be the beginning, the end, and the only rule of the former. When there is agreement, says he, of judgement in Christ; then there will also be union in mutual benevolence in him.

* Plea, &c. pages 187, 188.

It is only by this doctrine of Christ that we come to be knit together in a pious and holy union.*

Alex. What Calvin projected upon a large scale, was actually attempted and executed, after his death, upon a smaller one. The agreement of Poland† at the synod of Sandomir in 1570, six years after Calvin's decease, embracing the churches of greater and lesser Poland, which were organized under the Augsburgh or Lutheran, and under the Helvetian or Swiss Confession; as also under the Confession of the Waldenses; was *bottomed* upon those comprehensive principles, which supported the plan of Calvin. This *consensus* was for the express purpose of wiping away the reproach of their enemies, and of promoting brotherly concord and communion, on the ground of their agreement to the leading truths of the gospel; all things else being matters of forbearance.

"Of this holy and mutual agreement," say they, "we have thought "and agreed, that it would be a confirmation, if as they," the Lutherans, "bear witness that we, and our churches and our Confession, pub- "lished in this synod, and the churches and Confession of the brethren, "the Waldenses, are orthodox; so also we should manifest the same "christian love towards their churches, and acknowledge their ortho- "doxy, and should, on both sides, consign to silence, all quarrels, dis- "tractions, and dissensions, by which the cause of the gospel, to the "very great offence of many pious people, is hindered; and by which "no small occasion is furnished to our adversaries both of calumniating "ourselves and of opposing our true christian religion. It is rather "our duty to study the public peace; to exercise mutual charity; and "to employ, according to our brotherly union, our mutual efforts for "the edification of the church.

"We, moreover, pledge ourselves to use our utmost endeavours to "persuade and incite all our brethren to embrace, respect and pre- "serve this our christian and unanimous agreement; and to cherish "and seal it especially by the hearing of the word (in frequenting the "assemblies of both Confessions,) and by the use of the sacraments; "always observing good order, and the rule both of discipline and cus- "tom in each of the churches respectively.

"But the rites and ceremonies of each church we do, by this our "hearty consent, leave free: for it is no great matter what rites are "observed, provided, the doctrine and foundation of our faith and sal- "vation be kept entire and uncorrupt, as the Augsburgh and Saxon "Confessions teach on that head; and as we have expressed the same "in this our Confession published in the present synod of Sandomir. "And to complete this our consent and agreement, we have thought, "that, in order to preserve this our brotherly association, it will not "be inconvenient to meet at some appointed place, where we may to- "gether form a compend of doctrine taken from our mutual Confes- "sions; and publish it to the world, to stop the mouths of invidious "men, and minister great consolation to all the pious. Having, there-

* Caritatis conjunctio sic a fidei unitate pendet, ut hæc illius initium, finis, unica denique regula esse debeat. Dum mentes in Christo—consentiunt, voluntates etiam nostræ mutua in Christo benevolentia inter se conjunctæ sunt. Sola Christi, doctrina in piam et sanctam unitatem coalescimus. Institut. lib. iv. cap. 2da sect. 5.

† Poloniæ Consensus.

"fore, given to each other the right hand of union, we have all sacredly "promised and pledged ourselves, to cultivate, nourish and daily to "aim at increasing our faith and peace to the building up of the King-"dom of God; and that we will shun all occasions of distracting the "churches. Finally, we have pledged ourselves, that, regardless of "selfish considerations, as it becomes the true ministers of God, we "will promote the glory of Jesus Christ our Saviour alone, and will "propagate the truth of his gospel by word and work.

"And that this agreement may be firmly established for ever, we "ardently pray to God our Father, the Author and exuberant fountain "of all peace and consolation; who delivered us and our churches "from the gross darkness of Popery, and granted us the pure and "sacred light of his word and truth, that he would bless our peace and "*union* to the glory of his name, and the edification of his church. "To this instrument were added the subscriptions of eminent persons, "representing the several churches to which they belonged."

This agreement was unanimously confirmed in a general synod at Cracow, 1573. The whole synod, the brethren, superintendants, elders, ministers, patrons and all the rest ratified and sealed that holy consent and union; and after joining together in the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, according to the ceremonies of the church of Cracow, they returned home, rejoicing in brotherly love and praising the Lord.

This agreement was renewed by a general synod at Petrikow in 1578; by another general synod at Uladislaw in 1583; by another at Tornaw in Hungary in 1585; and by another at the same place in 1595, and continued to be religiously observed as late at least as 1634.

Ruf. It seems obvious, that this agreement of the Polish churches cannot be considered as an example of the catholic communion now pleaded for.

1. This agreement supposes the harmony of the Confessions of the parties who entered into it. The Lutherans acknowledged the Helvetian Confession and that of the Bohemian brethren to be orthodox; and, on the other hand, those who professed adherence to these Confessions acknowledged the Augsburgh Confession, (which is that of the Lutherans,) to be orthodox. Consequently, their profession had been always one; and now they declare it to be so; in order that the ground of their sacramental communion might be better understood. This agreement is very different from the scheme of catholic communion now pleaded for; that is, our sacramental communion with Episcopalians, with Baptists, with Methodists and others, whom we, in our public profession, deny to be orthodox.

This agreement declares, that they, who entered into it, received the article of the Augsburgh Confession concerning Christ's presence in the Lord's supper according to the edition given by Melanchthon in the year 1538.

"The sacraments, say they, are actions Divinely instituted, and the "elements of bread and wine, out of the instituted use of them, have "not the nature of a sacrament; but, in the instituted use of them, in "this communion, Christ is truly and substantially present, and his

"body and blood are truly exhibited to the partakers."* The term *substantially* is much the same with *really*, and is used by Calvin on this subject. He says, "These absurdities," viz. those of the Ubiquitarian scheme being rejected, "I willingly admit whatever serves to "express the true and substantial communication of the Lord's body "and blood."† It should also be remembered, that this agreement was entered into several years before the form of Concord agreed on at Berg which asserts the absurd scheme just now mentioned.

2. They, who entered into this agreement, declared, that they considered their participation of the Lord's supper as a confession, that they embraced the system of doctrine professed in the particular church with which they communicated.‡ But, according to the advocates for the catholic scheme, our participation of the Lord's supper does not imply our embracing the system of doctrine, held by any particular church: for, say they, in the act of communicating, we have nothing to do with the defects of our respective churches, or with any other thing, than this ordinance itself.

3. It was agreed, that no one of the churches belonging to this confederation should draw away the ministers or hearers of any of the rest; but should encourage them to remain in their respective churches. And the ministers of each of these churches were to teach and admonish their hearers, with pastoral authority, to beware of censuring any point of the doctrine or rites of the other churches; but, on the contrary, to think and speak well of them.‖ From this engagement it appears, that there were no such differences among those churches of Poland, as there are among those, which, according to your scheme of catholic communion, should communicate together. Presbyterians believe prelacy to be a criminal usurpation in the church of God: they believe, that antipædobaptism robs infants of their sacred right; and that the use of any uncommanded rite, as a part of religious worship, is superstition. We cannot reasonably suppose, that any Presbyterian ministers would come under an engagement to exhort their hearers to think and speak well of these things. As little can we suppose, that the ministers of Poland would have come under the engagement now mentioned, if there had been any such differences among them. We must, therefore, conclude, that, as they had no such differences; so their sacramental communion together could be no example of our sacramental communion with other churches, while such differences subsist between them and us.

4. The scheme of catholic communion now pleaded for supposes, that none are to be excluded for their errors or offences in non-essentials. This opinion is quite contrary to the spirit of the *Consensus* or

* Docentur homines, sacramenta esse actiones divinitus institutas, et extra usum institutum res ipsas non habere rationem sacramenti, sed in usu instituto in hac communione vere et substantialiter adesse Christum et vere exhiberi sumentibus corpus et sanguinem Christi. Syntagma Confessionum, prima parte, page 166.

† His absurditatibus sublatis, quicquid ad experimendam veram substantialemque corporis et sanguinis Domini communicationem, quæ sub sacris cœnæ symbolis fidelibus exhibetur, facere potest, libenter accipio. Institut. lib. 4. cap. 17. sect. 19.

‡ Quarta institutiones hujus causa vult hanc publicam sumptionem, confessionem esse, qua ostendis quod doctrinæ genus ampleetaris, cui cæteri te adjungas. Ibid. page 165.

‖ Syntagmete Confess. 2da parte, page 223.

agreement under consideration; which appoints all obstinate transgressors of the decrees of any of the canons of the general synod belonging to these churches contained in the book of their government; all who did not agree with them in the doctrine of the gospel; or who embraced idolatry or heresy; in fine, all who refused to continue in this agreement, to be excommunicated *without any delay*. According to this agreement, such as neglected to receive the Lord's supper, without good reasons, or the advice of their minister three times or a whole year; or who habitually neglected to attend the assemblies in their respective places of public worship, were liable to the same censure.*

In short, the spirit of this Consensus or agreement of the Popish churches, is quite contrary to that of the catholic sacramental communion now pleaded for. The manifest acknowledged tendency of that scheme, is to draw away particular churches and their members from a more particular and determined profession of various articles of the christian religion, to a more general and ambiguous one. Whereas, this Consensus is more particular and explicit, both in points of doctrine and discipline, than the confessions which had been held before by the churches that joined in it; while no article of any of these confessions was dropt, or ceased to belong to their public profession. The truth is, it was an agreement to maintain a faithful testimony against the errors which then prevailed in Poland.

Alex. It appears from the records preserved in Quick's Synodicon of the synod of St. Foy, in France, that an assembly of many deputies from sundry famous reformed churches, kingdoms and provinces, met at Frankfort, in 1577, by invitation of the Prince Elector John Casimir, Prince Palatine; that they laid down several means and expedients for uniting all the reformed churches into one common bond of union. This proposal was received with great satisfaction by the general synod of the French churches.

The same design was prosecuted by the synod of Figeac, in 1579, at which, consultation was held on the most proper means of uniting the several confessions, which agreed in doctrine, into one common confession; to be afterwards approved by the several Protestant churches.

The synod of Vitre, in 1583, embraced a proposal, made in their own body, for an *union* and *agreement* between the churches of Germany and theirs.

Twenty years afterwards, in 1603, at the synod of Gap, the brethren of Dauphiny desired that some means might be contrived for a conference and union with the Lutheran churches in Germany, in order that the schism between them and the French churches might be removed.

A proposal was made to the French churches, by a gentleman of the name of Hume, on the authority of James, king of Great Britain, for reuniting the churches of divers nations into one and the self-same confession and doctrine. This proposal is obscurely hinted in a letter from James, dated March 15th, 1614. Accordingly, at the general

* See the canons of the general synod at Tornaw. Syntagma Confessionum, parte 2da, page 246. The edition of the Syntagma, here quoted, is that printed at Geneva, in 1654.

synod held at Tonneins in May following, they drew the outlines of a detailed plan of union; in which plan, the first thing proposed, was to avoid the Arminian controversy. Out of the several confessions of the reformed churches, one was to be framed common to them all; in which general confession divers points might be omitted, the knowledge of which is not needful to our everlasting happiness: among which, the controversy moved by Piscator, and several other subtile opinions broached by Van Armin* about free will, the saints' perseverance, and predestination were to be reckoned. The second thing proposed, was to avoid contentions about ceremonies and church government: a difference in these respects not hindering our agreement in the same faith and doctrine; or our cordial embracing each other as true believers and joint members of one and the same body. The third thing proposed, was to wave the points in debate between the Reformed and the Lutherans; and for this end, to model their agreement after the concord of the Polish churches, made at Sandomir, in the year 1570.

It was proposed, that the deputies from the reformed churches should close their deliberations on this plan, after a most religious fast, with the celebration of the Lord's supper; wherein the pastors from England and the other nations should all communicate together.

This plan for Protestant *union* did not only contemplate the reciprocation of ministerial and christian fellowship in the several churches; for that had been in regular practice among Protestants all along. It went much farther; even to the organization of the whole Protestant interest in a public *federative union;* each of the component churches, however, retaining its own independence and internal order. It was Calvin's plan renewed or prosecuted.

It may be farther observed, that the activity of the French churches in promoting this plan, furnished no proof of their having declined from their soundness in the faith, or their zeal in maintaining it. For in 1617, their general synod of Vitre appointed commissioners to attend the synod of Dort, for the purpose of deciding on the several points of the Arminian controversy: and at their general synod held at Alez, in 1620, they unanimously approved the articles agreed upon at Dort; and ordered them to be sworn and subscribed by the pastors and elders of their churches, and by the doctors and professors of their universities. How cordially they could take to their bosom the very persons, against whose errors they raised the voice of their testimony, provided these errors subverted not the foundation of their faith, is shown by an act of the second synod of Charenton, in 1631, in favour of the Lutheran brethren; declaring that, as the churches of the Confession of Augsburgh do agree with the other reformed churches in the principal and fundamental points of the true religion, and as there is neither superstition nor idolatry in their worship; the faithful of the said Confession, who with a spirit of love and peaceableness do join themselves to the communion of our churches in this kingdom, may be, without any abjuration at all made by them, admitted to the Lord's table with us; and, as sureties, may present children to baptism; they promising the consistory, that they will never solicit these children, either directly or indirectly to transgress the doctrine believed and

* Arminius.

professed in our churches; but will be content to educate them in those points and articles in which both we and the Lutherans are unanimously agreed.*

Ruf. You have observed, that this plan for Protestant union, did not only contemplate the reciprocation of ministerial and christian fellowship in the several churches; for that had been in regular practice among Protestants all along. This is true. These churches had all separated from the Popish church; and they agreed in their testimony against the errors and corruptions of that church. Their attention was engaged, and their hearts endeared to one another by the common cause. Hence, they communicated together without scruple. Considering the local situations of these churches, the little communication they had at first with one another, and the variety of their means of information; it was no wonder that there were differences of opinion and practice. It was, indeed, owing to a remarkable measure of the presence and Spirit of God with them, that they attained the harmony of doctrine which is so conspicuous in their confessions. While this harmony continued, there was no occasion for the catholic communion now pleaded for. But differences soon began to appear; which, unless they were removed, they were sensible, would interrupt their communion: for they could not walk together, except they were agreed. The removal of their differences seems to have been the object of the several proposals of *union* which you have mentioned. Sometimes a difference may arise from a misunderstanding of a doctrine or practice; and may be removed by a more particular explication. Sometimes it arises from real error held by one church in opposition to a scriptural truth proposed by another church. The difference, last mentioned, cannot be removed without a renunciation of the error.

In these two ways, such men as Calvin honestly laboured to bring churches and their members to union. But others, led by carnal policy, have attempted to bring churches and their members to a pretended union; which consisted in an agreement to differ, and to acquiesce in a general and deceitful way of expressing a doctrine that had been controverted, declining the plain and honest expression of it that had been used in the public profession of one or another of the parties. This, indeed, is the plan of your scheme of catholic communion. But it is dealing deceitfully in the matters of God. The pretended healing of divisions in this way, is a healing of the wound of God's people slightly, saying, peace, peace, while there is no peace. Of this kind the proposal seems to have been, which you mentioned, of union among the churches, in the way of conniving at superstitious ceremonies and prelatical church government. It is not unlike the kingcraft of James the first, but suits ill with the excellent character of the Reformed church of France, at that time. For what end were these churches to unite, if it was not for maintaining such evangelical truths, as those denied by the Arminians and by Piscator? The churches of France had, some years before the date of this proposal, justly condemned the peculiar opinion of Piscator concerning the active obedience of Christ; and in their national assembly at Rochelle, had asserted, in opposition to Piscator's error, that the whole obe-

* Plea, &c. pages 197, 198, 199, 200—206.

dience of Christ, both in his life and death, is imputed to us for our justification before God. But how their approving the canons of the synod of Dort, and appointing them to be sworn and subscribed by the pastors and elders of their churches, could consist with a proposal of admitting to their sacramental communion those whom these canons condemn as gross heretics, I confess, I do not understand.

At the general synod held at Tonneins, the outlines of this plan of union are said to have been drawn. It is not said, however, that the synod approved these outlines. But if they did approve them, they retracted their approbation a few years afterward; when they solemnly adopted the articles of the synod of Dort. There is, indeed, no reason to doubt, that the reformed churches of France understood better, after the synod of Dort, how diametrically opposite the opinions broached by Van Armin were to the doctrine of their confession, than they had done before. Considering that the Arminian scheme includes some of the most pernicious errors of Popery, how reproachful is it to the memory of Calvin, to call such a base proposal, his plan revived and prosecuted? Did Mr. Calvin ever speak of independent churches in the one church of Christ? Or of promoting union, by holding sacramental communion with the professed teachers of false doctrine, as every Arminian teacher is, or with the professed defenders of superstition in the worship of God? By no means.

With regard to the attempts that were made to bring about union with the Lutheran churches, that is, with such of them as had not adopted the form of Concord published in 1577, nor gone into the extremes of the Ubiquitarians, there seems to be no difficulty; since none of the articles of the Augsburgh Confession had been condemned by any of the reformed churches. On this account, the act of the synod of Charenton in favor of the Lutheran brethren, cannot be considered as a precedent for the motley communion now pleaded for; and also, because the conditions of church communion, stated in that act, are such as no avowed and obstinate enemy to any one article of the Confession of the Reformed church of France, could acquiesce in without the grossest inconsistency.

§ 47. *Alex.* If from France, we pass to Holland, we shall there find the same generous feeling towards all the parts of the church of God. The Belgic Confession, which shows in what light the church there contemplated the privilege and duty of church communion, received the unqualified approbation of the continental divines, at the Synod of Dort, in 1618. And it received also, with the exception of its articles on church government, the approbation of the Episcopal divines who were sent thither by James I. Here was a collection of representatives of the reformed churches; various in their modifications of order and rites of worship; yet one in the common faith of the gospel: Dutch, German, Genevese, Swiss, all non-episcopal, with an English bishop and other Episcopal delegates, met together to discuss one of the most serious controversies that ever agitated the church of God; and united in the most solemn acts of ministerial communion.

Dr. Joseph Hall, then dean of Worcester, and afterwards bishop of Norwich, delivered a sermon in Latin before the synod, in which he salutes the church of Holland as the pure spouse of Christ. From these arrangements it appears, that the reformed churches, Episcopal

and non-episcopal, did not scruple in those days to join with each other in acts of public worship, according to their respective usages. Much less did any of them look upon any other as not being true churches, and upon their ministry and ordinances as unlawful and invalid. Such a notion, concerning churches without Episcopal order and ordination, had not yet infected the church of England. Her representatives at Dort, call the ministers of the Dutch church, beloved brethren and fellow-ministers. The views and feelings of Dr. Hall, correspond entirely with those of the whole Synod: for they call his discourse most learned and accurate, and gave him public thanks for it. So that, considering how the synod was constituted, it may be taken as an official expression of the views and feelings of reformed Europe. At the close of the synod, the members mutually gave each other the right hand of fellowship, and parted with embracings and tears.

As to the church of Holland, it is well known, that she practised the liberal communion, of which those illustrious deputies sanctioned the principle, and set an example. For her members, before this, communicated with the Brownists, the English Independents, who fled from oppressions in their own country; although, by a singular inconsistency, the Brownist teachers would not consent to reciprocate the communion any farther than in prayer and hearing the word; and that in the face of their own protestation, wherein they say, We account the reformed churches as true and genuine: we profess communion with them in the sacred things of God; and as much as in us lies, we cultivate it: an inconsistency, which it is heartily to be wished had stood alone, and had not been kept in countenance by the profession and practice of later days; but which, at that time, was equalled only by the inconsistency of the English government, in supporting the non-episcopal churches abroad, and persecuting the very same sort of churches at home. The church of Holland, was ready to communicate in the sacraments with the English dissenters, as well as with the establishment; and actually appointed one of the former, the learned and excellent Dr. William Ames, professor of Theology in the university of Franeker.

In like manner, thirty years afterward, in 1651, that holy man of God, Samuel Rutherford, of St. Andrews, in Scotland, was invited to the professors chair, in the city of Utrecht. In fact, the churches of Holland and Scotland, like the Reformed churches on the continent, considered and treated each other as parts of a common whole; and, by their connexion and intercourse, as they had opportunity, an example of catholic communion to which the obligation is so clearly asserted in their confessions.*

Ruf. I have no doubt, that the Belgick Confession received the unqualified approbation of the continental divines; this being a native consequence of what has been stated concerning the harmony of the confessions of the reformed churches. Their sacramental communion upon this ground, as we have seen, was no example of the catholic sacramental communion now contended for. There was indeed a greater appearance of such an example in the communion of these churches with the bishop and other members of the church of England.

† Plea, &c. pages 206, 207—212.

I do not say, I approve of this communion absolutely, or in all respects. But though the reformed churches in France, in Germany, and in Holland, disliked the Episcopacy of the church of England; none of them had ever stated a formal separation from that church; and she had not stated a formal separation from them. They knew that the first reformers in England, such as Cranmer, Jewel and others, spoke of the identity of the office of bishop and presbyter, and of humanly devised rites and ceremonies, as no part of religious worship, much in the same terms with those which are used concerning them in the confessions of the other reformed churches; and they still had hopes that the church of England would go forward in reformation. In short, while that church had not stated any opposition to the profession of the reformed churches, nor these churches any opposition to her profession; their sacramental communion with her was no example of the catholic communion now pleaded for. It is plain, that there was nothing at this time to hinder the church of Scotland from having sacramental communion with any of the reformed churches excepting the church of England; as nothing had been stated in her public profession in opposition to any other of them; nor in the public profession of these other churches in opposition to her.

You observe, that while the members of the church of Holland communicated with the Brownist teachers; these teachers, by a singular inconsistency, would not consent to reciprocate the communion, any farther than in prayer and hearing the word; and that in the face of Robinson's Protestation, in which he declared, that they accounted the reformed churches as true and genuine; and that they professed communion with them in the sacred things of God. But you forgot to add (what aggravates the inconsistency of the Brownists; but serves, at the same time, to shew that the conduct of the church of Holland, in communicating with them, was no example of the catholic communion which is now contended for) that Robinson also declared the adherence of the Brownists or Congregationalists, to the confessions of the reformed churches, in this very solemn manner: "We profess, before "God and men, we so agree with the reformed church of Holland, "that we are willing to subscribe all, and each of the articles of faith "of these churches, as they are contained in the harmony of the con-"fessions of faith.* Now, if the church of Holland had sacramental communion with these ministers and people, upon the ground of this declaration, it could be no example of the catholic communion in question; because, according to that declaration, there was not a single article of the public profession of the church of Holland which they opposed. With regard to Dr. Ames, as he was a member and minister of that church; so it is well known, that he was a most cordial friend, and an able defender of her public profession.

* Profitemur coram Deo et hominibus, adeo nobis convenire cum Ecclesiis Reformatis Belgicis, ut omnibus et singulis earundem Ecclesiarum fidei articulis prout habentur in harmonia confessionum fidei; parati sumus subscribere. Robinson's Apology, as quoted in the 4th vol. of Mosheim, page 266.

DIALOGUE VII.

The separation of the Puritans in the reign of queen Elizabeth from the established church of England.....The ground of their separation farther illustrated.....The declared design of the meeting of the Westminster Assembly.....The Solemn League and Covenant inconsistent with this scheme of sacramental communion.....The Westminster Confession designed to be a bond of church communion;—connected with the Presbyterial form of church government, and contrary to the opinions of the Independents.....This scheme of catholic communion not consonant to the 26th chapter of that Confession.....Christian communion distinguished from church communion.....Of a harmony of the Reformed Confessions; of the Westminster Assembly's letter to the Reformed churches; and of a passage in Neal's History concerning the Anabaptists.....Of a quotation from the preface of a book entitled, Jus Divinum ministerii Evangelici.....Of the Savoy Confession..... Of Dr. Owen's judgement concerning church communion.....Of the sentiments of other divines on this subject.

ALEXANDER, having again paid RUFUS a visit, found him in his study engaged in the perusal of a history of Great Britain; when the following conversation took place.

Alex. So beautiful is the style of Xenophon and Livy that we are never weary of attending to the details they give us of the affairs of Greece and Rome. But the history of our forefathers in the Island of Briton is to us more interesting, and, I may venture to say, more instructive.

Ruf. The history of the Reformation there, is peculiarly so. Of the nations that renounced the jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, there were none that attained more purity in doctrine, worship and government than Scotland; and scarcely any of them so defective in these respects as England. So that in the example of the British churches both the remoras or hindrances of the Reformation, and the true causes of its advancement are eminently conspicuous.

§ 48. *Alex.* Your remark leads me to propose, that we should now pursue the subject of our former conversations. We have enquired, whether the sacramental communion that obtained among the Reformed churches on the continent of Europe corresponded with the catholic scheme of sacramental communion which is now pleaded for. Let us now make the same enquiry with regard to the British churches. Even in the early part of the reign of Elizabeth, violent measures were adopted in relation to those who had conscientious objections to some observances in the establishment. But still the great Protestant principle of communion was not removed. Neither the civil nor the ecclesiastical government of England thought of denying the lawfulness and the duty of communion between the Protestant churches, notwithstanding their variations from each other in smaller things.

The first instance, in which one of the Reformed churches renounced the fellowship of another was in 1634, when lord Scudamore, instead of going to the Protestant church at Charenton, furnished his chapel after the new fashion with candles on the altar; and took care to publish on all occasions, that the church of England looked not on the Huguenots as a part of their communion. On the other hand, the Puritans were not severed from the established church by any whim,

or abuse, or corruption, which they were not required to approve. They grieved, they mourned, they expostulated about things which afflicted their consciences; but they thought not of separation. Had they not been required to deny what they believed to be true, and to profess what they believed to be falsehood; had not the price of their peace in the establishment been rated so high, as the perjury of their souls before God, they had never been separated from the church of England.*

Ruf. There are degrees of separation. The Puritans were certainly known, even in the early part of Queen Elizabeth's reign, as a body of ministers and people distinct from those who defended and practised several superstitious ceremonies of the established church. This appears from a statute of the 13th of Queen Elizabeth which required dissenting teachers, in order to be exempted from the penalties of other statutes, to subscribe such of the 39 articles of the established church as contain the Confession of faith and the doctrine of the sacraments, those being excepted which relate to the government and the powers of the church.† Such subscribers, though not ordained by the Prelates, were admitted to officiate, as ministers of the church of England.‡ They were, however, considered as dissenters.

About the year 1571, when the 39 articles were confirmed by an act of parliament, the Puritans had separate meetings, and erected classes or Presbyteries, which met once in six weeks, and a general synod, which was to meet once every year; according to a plan which Mr. Cartwright and Mr. Travers had drawn up; a plan much the same with that which was afterwards agreed on by the Westminster Assembly. In the year 1586, about four hundred preachers were suspended or deposed who had agreed to observe this plan.||

Thus it appears, that they thought of separation: and the reason, why they thought of it, was, not because the church of England, by that ministerial authority which Christ has given to the officers of his house, required, as a term of communion, an approbation of what was scriptural in her profession, or in her form of worship, and government.

But they judged it necessary to withdraw from her communion for other reasons; such as, First, because the things imposed were corruptions: such as the false doctrine of the 20th article, "That the church "hath power to decree rites and ceremonies;" taken in connexion with their use of humanly devised rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Liturgy as parts or means of Divine worship. They could not conscientiously join in such worship on account of the Divine prohibition in Deut. xii. 32, *What things soever I commanded you, observe to do it, thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.* The Puritans could not find that God had ever commanded the things prescribed as stated means of religious worship; and they believed that religious worship in ways devised and commanded by men, was vain worship, Math. xv. 9.

* Plea, &c. p. 213, 214, 215, 216. † Blackstone's Commentaries, Book 4, chap. 4.

‡ Melius Inquirendum, page 56.

|| Brown's History of the church of England, page 148 and 149. Pierce's Vindication, page 90.

Secondly, because it is the duty of the ministers and other members of every particular church to endeavour after farther reformation: and therefore, when the majority of such a church, instead of concurring in such endeavours, obstinately opposes them; and when the power, with which Christ has vested the office-bearers of his church, cannot be exercised for that end in her communion; then it becomes the duty of the minority to exercise it for carrying on reformation, in a *separate society*. For, to use the words of a writer who was well acquainted with the principles and practice of the Puritans; "They said, if a "church retains some corruptions in it, which prejudice edification; "and resolves never to make any alteration in her worship and disci-"pline, nor to make any farther progress in a thorough reformation; "it would be our sin, not to provide for ourselves elsewhere, or not to "take the opportunity which Providence offers, and to do what the "word warrants."* This reason accorded with the views of the first English Reformers, who were sensible, that the form of church government and of public worship, which they thought it necessary from their circumstances to adopt, was not in many respects such as the word of God required; but they desired and expected, that the reformation in England would be carried on according to the pattern of the other reformed churches.†

It does not appear, that the Puritans, after they had thus formed themselves into separate societies, had sacramental communion with the zealots for the ceremonies. The rules of their discipline could not tolerate those corruptions in their communion which had caused their separation from the established church. But in the reign of Edward the VIth, and in the beginning of Elizabeth's, they acquiesced in the public profession which was then made by the Reformers in the 39 articles, hoping, that the established church would go forward in reformation. They adhered to these articles as agreeing with the scripture and as harmonizing with the other Confessions of the reformed churches in non-essentials as well as essentials: And it is of importance to observe, that the clause in the 20th article so offensive to the Puritans, viz. *The church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies*, is not to be found in the authentic articles as agreed on in the reign of Edward the sixth.‡ So that neither when the Puritans acquiesced in the order of the establisment, nor when they separated from it, was their sacramental communion any example of the scheme of catholic communion now pleaded for.

§ 49. *Alex.* The Puritans did not retire; they were driven from her bosom: and they have thus left upon record their testimony of martyrdom to the sacredness of that communion which belongs to the church of God, and to the criminality of dividing it upon slight pretexts.||

Ruf. The unwarrantableness of the king's supremacy over spiritual causes and of his usurped authority, by which he pretends to enjoin observances in religious worship under civil penalties, is an argument that has been justly insisted upon by dissenters from the church of

* Melius Inquirendum, page 165.

† Pierce's Vindication of the dissenters, page 11. M'Crie's Life of John Knox, p. 84, 85.

‡ Melius Inquirendum, page 137. || Plea, &c. pages 216, 217.

England in later times: But it was not much used by any dissenters, excepting the Brownists, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James the 1st. The Puritans seemed to own the authority of the civil magistrate, as extending to matters of religion. But they considered his enjoining things in religion that were not warranted by the word of God, as an abuse of that authority. Mr. Hume says, it may be questioned, whether the administration at this time could with propriety deserve the appellation of persecutors for punishing the Puritans in Elizabeth's reign; because a man ought not to accept of an office in an establishment, while he declines compliance with the fixed and known laws of that establishment. But the laws with regard to conformists were not at first so rigid or fixed, as he seems to suppose. There was no law of the land requiring subscription till the year 1571;* and the law itself requiring the subscription of the articles, as I already observed, allowed them to subscribe, with the exception of those relating to the government and powers of the church. Fenner says, "that the ministers "in Sussex, in their subscription, excepted all things in the Rubric, "that were not understood as agreeable to the holy scriptures or the "analogy of faith, as now maintained by the church of England; and "that several subscribed not the articles at all."†

But that it is persecution to fine, imprison, and put men to death for refusing to observe, under the name of religion, ceremonies which God never commanded, cannot be doubted by any who know what religion is.

Farther, that what induced the Puritans to decline the communion of the Conformists was the superstitious ceremonies themselves as being contrary to the word of God, and a symbolizing with the idolatry of the Papists, and not merely the imposing of them by civil authority, appears from the beginning of the separation which took place in the reign of Mary among the exiles at Frankfort. Among them, Dr. Cox and his friends, having introduced the English Liturgy, instead of the form of worship used by the French church; having laid aside the discipline, which had been agreed to, and having appointed a bishop, or superintendant over the pastors; boasted, that they had now the form of an English church. The consequence was, that a considerable number of the members left Frankfort; some of them, repairing to Basil, and the greater part, to Geneva; where they obtained a place of worship and lived in great harmony and love, until the death of Mary. Now at Frankfort there was no enjoining of the use of the Liturgy and ceremonies, by the civil authority but rather the contrary: for the magistrates of Frankfort had issued an order, that the congregation should conform to the worship used by the French church.‡ If these people, (who were the same that were afterwards called Puritans,) thought it lawful to have sacramental communion with those who retained the English Liturgy and ceremonies, why did they carry their opposition to these peculiarities so far as to leave Frankfort, that they might enjoy the ordinances of God without them?

* Strype's annals quoted by Pierce in his Vindication, page 55.

† Fenner's Defence of the godly ministers, quoted by Pierce in his Vindication, page 109.

‡ M'Crie's life of John Knox, page 118.

These people, who then desired to have the ordinances of God in purity, were driven away from this society at Frankfort; just as persons at this day may be constrained to come out of any particular church, when their consciences will not suffer them to continue in it, on account of corruptions or backslidings openly avowed and obstinately persisted in.

After Elizabeth came to the throne, when the Puritans saw Popish ceremonies retained, godly ministers silenced, and the churches occupied by a mercenary generation who had been violent Papists, they found, that they could not warrantably attend on such a ministry. A number of these people in London applied to Coverdale, who had been bishop of Exeter, and who hated the superstitions which the government thought fit to continue, desiring to know where they might hear him; but he, afraid of offending government, declined mentioning any place where he would preach. But, as they resolved to have a congregation of their own, they privately hired the Plumber's Hall for the purpose of religious worship. About one hundred of them met there and used the Geneva service. But they were discovered by the sheriff, and a number of them were taken and kept in prison above a year.*

These dissenters were treated with so much severity for no other reason, than their refusing to join in the public worship, where the superstitious ceremonies were used; and for worshipping God according to the rule of his word in a separate congregation. If they had agreed to the principle, that neither Prelacy nor ceremonies are any bar to sacramental communion, they would not have needed to form a congregation of their own, nor to expose themselves to suffering on that account. The case now related was not singular: there were frequent instances of the same kind.

On the whole, it is evident, that if Prelacy and the Popish ceremonies of the church of England were slight pretexts, then a great and respectable part of the members of that church were divided from the prevailing party on slight pretexts. On this supposition, Samson, Deering, Gifford, Cartwright, and other Puritan ministers, maintained a testimony against the established church on slight pretexts; and Aylmer, Whitgift and others are to be commended for restraining them. Can the most violent enemies of the Puritans say any thing worse of them?

Alex. The church of England continued in this uncomfortable state; the secular hierarchy commanding, and the scriptural conscience disobeying and suffering, till that memorable epoch in the reign of Charles I, the meeting of the assembly of divines at Westminster in 1643. This assembly was called for the express purpose of reforming more perfectly the discipline, liturgy and government of the church; so that such a government might be settled in the church as would be most agreeable to God's word, and most apt to procure, and preserve the peace of the church at home, and nearer agreement with the church of Scotland, and other Reformed churches abroad. The assembly was originally composed of Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Independents, with commissioners, both lay and clerical from the church of Scotland. The Episcopal divines withdrew at an early period of their

* Pierce's Vindication, page 64, 65.

discussions, viz. before the introduction of the Solemn League and Covenant, and the number of Independents was but small.

On the form of church government there was difference of judgement, long and warm debate, and great embarrassment. In the body of christian doctrine there was almost a perfect harmony. The Confession, as far as it related to articles of faith, passed the assembly by a great majority; and was without exception adopted by the church of Scotland. The Independents in 1658, published a confession of faith, called the Savoy Confession, which is for substance, the same as the assembly's; only they omitted all those chapters in the assembly's Confession which relate to discipline; as the 30th and 31st, with part of the 20th and 24th. In the result, therefore, of the Westminster Assembly's deliberation,—an assembly not surpassed even by the Synod of Dort, or the council of Nice,—we have the doctrinal judgement of the English Presbyterians and Independents, and the whole church of Scotland.*

§ 50. *Ruf.* The General Assembly of the church of Scotland, in their answer to the declaration of the parliament of England, represented "the union of the whole Island in one form of church government, one confession of faith, one common catechism, and one directory for the worship of God," as the design for which the Westminster Assembly was called.

Though this uniformity is no more than what Christ requires in his word; though it is no more than the obligation that church members are under to adhere not only to the principal or essential articles, but to the whole of the christian religion; yet it is manifestly inconsistent with the catholic scheme of communion in question. For, according to this scheme, a particular church ought to receive into her sacramental communion multitudes without requiring of them any assent to many truths and duties, which she herself acknowledges to belong to the christian religion; or rather she should suffer the most open and obstinate contempt of truth and duty, if it be what is termed not essential, to pass in her communicants without any church censure. Our forefathers accounted the open avowal of contrary opinions and practices in matters of religion an evil not to be tolerated in the communion of the visible church; but to be struggled against, and, if possible, prevented or removed. But it is a discovery that has been reserved for this enlightened age, that agreeing to differ as to all points of truth and duty that are not essential, is all the perfection which the visible church is to aim at in respect of her sacramental communion.

§ 51. The people of all ranks in Scotland and England, and particularly the parliaments of these kingdoms, and the Westminster Assembly, engaged to promote and maintain this uniformity by entering into the Solemn League and Covenant. This Covenant was an engagement to endeavour to bring the churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory for worship and catechizing, in order that they and their posterity, might, as brethren, live in faith and love, and that the Lord might delight to dwell in the midst of them. It was an engagement to endeavour, without respect of per-

* Plea, &c. pages 218, 219, 220.

sons, the extirpation of popery, prelacy, superstition, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever should be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness, that they might not partake of other men's sins, nor be in danger to receive of their plagues, and that the Lord might be one and his name one, in the three kingdoms. It was an engagement against neutrality and indifference in the cause of God, with respect to all these particulars. It is not necessary to understand the word *extirpation*, as it stands in this Solemn Covenant, of inflicting civil punishment on persons for errors or offences in matters purely religious. Nay, spiritual weapons only, as presbyterial government and discipline, the pure preaching of the word, and prayer, are to be used according to the design of that covenant for rooting such errors and offences out of the church. But it is necessary to understand this covenant engagement, with respect to the particular churches that entered into it, as binding them to endeavour to extirpate those evils by the use of spiritual weapons, particularly, by excluding from sacramental communion those persons who were openly and obstinately persisting in those evils; for particular churches cannot otherwise avoid being partakers of the sin of such persons.

§ 52. Presbyterial church government belonged to the uniformity engaged to in the Solemn League and Covenant. According to some historians, this Covenant was so framed, by the artifice of Henry Vane, as to disappoint the views of the general assembly of the church of Scotland; because it contained no such obligation, as they supposed it did, to Presbyterial church government. These writers say, that the engagement to endeavour the reformation in England and Ireland in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches, left room for the adopting of another form of church government than the Presbyterian, such as, Independency, or arch-bishop Usher's scheme of moderate episcopacy. But this is very absurd; for as it was well known, that, by the church government agreeable to the word of God, the church of Scotland meant the Presbyterian; so the good faith, which men ought to have in all their contracts, especially in those of a religious nature, would not allow the English to agree to these words and swear them, while they understood them in another sense. Besides, the English certainly engaged to receive Presbyterial church government, when they not only renounced Prelatical, but swore that they would endeavour to preserve the former in the church of Scotland, and, at the same time, to bring the churches of England and Scotland to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in that as well as in other respects.

Farther, it was allowed both by the English parliament at that time, and by the general assembly, that the best reformed churches were those that had adopted the Presbyterial form of government; such as the reformed churches of France, of Switzerland and Holland.

§ 53. There are two things, among others, in Presbytery inconsistent with catholic or latitudinarian communion. In the first place, Presbyterial church government is a Divine institution. It is not grounded on custom, on the peculiar genius or prevailing opinion of this or the other country, or in the imitation of any form of civil government; but on the authority and command of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The opinion that the church of Christ has no particular form of government of his appointment, is highly dishonouring to him, as her Lawgiver and King. It derogates also from the perfection of the scriptures, as it supposes they do not direct the church certainly or particularly what officers she ought to have, nor clearly ascertain the duty of these officers as distinct from that of other members. But the doctrine of God's word on this head, in opposition to Prelacy and Independency, is sufficiently set forth, in the form of church government agreed upon by the Westminster Assembly. It is, then, an article of the faith once delivered to the saints; it is part of the reformation, which the church has attained; that Presbyterial church government is to be held as a Divine institution; and that we ought, therefore, to have no sacramental communion with any, while they persist in the sin and scandal of a public and obstinate denial of it. In the second place, it is a principle essential to presbyterial church government, that the determination of presbyterial courts agreeable to the word of God are to be submitted to, not only for their agreement with his word, but for the authority by which they are made, as being his ordinance. Sacramental communion with those who openly and obstinately refuse such submission, is no less contrary to the essential principles of presbyterial church government, than the encouragement of the open and incorrigible disobedience of children would be to the due maintenance of parental authority.

§ 54. I cordially agree with your encomium on the Westminster Assembly and their Confession; but not with the supposition, that some part of it, and not the whole, was to be a bond of church communion. That the church of Scotland regarded the whole work in this light is evident from their act approving it, in which they declare their judgement, that this Confession, being found by the assembly upon due examination, to be most agreeable to the word of God, and to the received doctrine, worship, discipline and government of that church, should be approved and established in both kingdoms as a principal part of that uniformity in religion, which, by the Solemn League and Covenant, they were bound to promote; an uniformity in all the parts of this Confession; an uniformity in worship and discipline, as well as in doctrine. It was also received, as a special means of the more effectual suppression of the many dangerous errors and heresies of those times. The errors here meant must be understood as including all such as were contrary to the uniformity engaged to in the Solemn League and Covenant. It is obvious, that the Confession thus adopted by the church of Scotland, could not answer these ends, if she allowed any article of it to be openly and obstinately rejected by those whom she admitted to sacramental communion.

With regard to the limitations added in this act, they tend to confirm this position, that the whole Confession was considered as the bond of church communion; for these limitations suppose, that the assembly reckoned, that, if there had been any article in the Confession, of which no approbation was to be required of church members, it would not have been necessary to except that article; for these limitations shew how solicitous the assembly was to remove whatever might occasion scruples, or hinder the sincere and intelligent approbation of any part whatever of the Confession.

§ 55. The divines, appointed by the parliament to compose the assembly at Westminster, were Episcopalians, as well as Presbyterians and Independents. But the Episcopalians, either did not attend the assembly at all, or left it in a short time after it met, on account of the king's prohibition of it. Mr. Bailie, a judicious and respectable member of the assembly, in a letter written concerning it some months before the Confession was under consideration, says, "There is no man "here to speak a word for bishops, or liturgy, or any ceremony.* "The Independents, who were but few, continued some attendance; "though they were, the most part of the time, absent. But, as they "obstinately opposed the form of church government agreed on by "the assembly, it was found meet," says Mr. Bailie, "to put them to "declare their mind positively, what they would be at." In another letter he says, "We have been long in expectation of a model" (of church government) "from the Independents: but yesterday, after "seven months waiting, they have scorned us. The assembly having "put them to it, to make a report of their diligence, they gave us a "sheet or two of injurious reasons, why they would not give us any "reasons of their tenets. We have appointed a committee to an-"swer that libel. We think they agree not among themselves."† In short, the assembly carried their opposition to the Independents too far, in refusing that they should be allowed by the civil magistrate to have separate congregations. This, however, did not proceed from their entertaining the opinion of our advocates for catholic communion about the unlawfulness of withdrawing in any case from a particular church, that holds the essentials of the christian religion; but from the high notions which they had formed of the authority of the civil magistrate to restrain the profession of false religion, and to establish that of the true. But though they erred in this respect, it does not follow, that they erred in respect of church communion; especially by going into the extreme of laxness. If they would not tolerate Independency in the state, they would much less tolerate it in the communion of the church of Christ. It did not interfere with civil government; but it evidently, in a great measure, excluded the only form of government which Christ has appointed in his church. Nor can it be concluded, that the Presbyterians were for continuing in church communion with the Independents, from their sitting with them in the assembly; for this assembly was no proper judicature of an organized church: but rather, as Mr. Bailie says, a meeting called by the Parliament to advise them in what things they were asked.‡ Nay, the supposition, that they favoured what is now termed catholic communion, is contrary to the design of their dealing and reasoning so long with these brethren: which design was to remove Independency, as what they found inconsistent with regular and comfortable sacramental communion. Mr. Bailie tells us in one of his letters, that Mr. Thomas Goodwin, one of the most eminent of the Independent ministers, excited great prejudice against himself and his party in the assembly, by declaring publicly, (what is held by every abettor of the catholic communion now pleaded for,) "That he could not refuse any to be "members, nor subject them to any censure, when members, for Ana-"baptism, Lutheranism, or any errors which are not fundamental, nor

* Bailie's Letters and Journals, vol. ii. page 24. † Ibid. page 160. ‡ Ibid. page 20.

"maintained against knowledge." This ingenuous and most timeous, although merely accidental, profession, says Mr. Bailie, "has much "allayed the favour of some to their toleration."*

It may be added, that when the church of Scotland renewed the Solemn League and Covenant in the year 1648, Independency is first mentioned in a catalogue of the national sins, against which they engaged to contend and testify, as contrary to their covenanted uniformity, and the purity of religion; and therefore, it is not supposable, that the church of Scotland would admit to sacramental communion, such as avowed their obstinate persisting in this evil.

§ 56. *Alex.* Let us view the second section of the twenty-sixth chapter of the Westminster Confession; which describes the communion which ought to subsist between professed christians, in their relation to each other, as visible members of the church of God. The parties are saints by profession; that is, those who make a credible profession of religion; whom, according to the rules of scriptural judgement, we are to acknowledge as fellow-christians. The communion, which they are to cherish with each other, is defined in its nature, its extent, and in the principles of its application. As to its nature, it consists in a communion in the worship of God; that is, in his instituted ordinances in his church; in acts of religious good will, which, though they fall not within the worship of God, are yet such spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; and also, in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. As to the extent of their communion, in all its branches, it is to embrace christians as such of every denomination, even all who call upon the Lord Jesus, of every country or clime, even all who in every place call on him. This communion, in all its extent, is a duty which they are not at liberty to forego; they are bound to maintain this communion.

The application of this doctrine is to be regulated by providential circumstances, as God offereth opportunity. When he, in his Providence, fairly puts it in your way, you are not to shun to accept such an opportunity of testifying your love to his people, by joining with them in the ordinances dispensed among them, or welcoming them to the ordinances dispensed among yourselves.

The churches, then, which have adopted the Westminster Confession, have decided in favour of a communion as catholic and generous, as that of the apostolic, and primitive and protestant ages. Nothing remains for them, but to shew, by their example, that they believe their own doctrine; that the profession which they are in the habit of making to God and to men, is a fair exhibition of their principles.†

Ruf. I cordially agree to all you have now said of this chapter of the Confession, excepting that, when you say, the extent of it embraces christians, *as such*, of every denomination. If you mean joining in sacramental communion with those bearing the christian name, of all professions, however corrupt; with Papists, Arminians, Anabaptists, and Episcopalians, without requiring any acknowledgment of their errors, such a construction is equally inconsistent with the true meaning of the article, with the well known principles of the Westminster Assembly, and with the explanation you yourself gave, in a former conversation, of this expression, "*Those that call on the name of the*

* Bailie's Letters, vol. ii. page 172. † Plea, &c. pages 222, 223, 224.

Lord Jesus." The communion treated of, in this chapter of the Confession, takes place, in various degrees, as Providence affords opportunity. There is one degree of it, in the relief that christians afford one another in outward things: another, in performing spiritual services, tending to their mutual edification; as in ministering privately, to the instruction and consolation of each other: a third, in private religious worship; as in families: a fourth, in public ordinances; particularly in the sacraments. We may have communion in the former degrees with many, with whom it would be unwarrantable to have it in the last degree. The Israelites might have communion with pious strangers, that were not circumcised, in almsgiving and prayer; but not in eating the passover. There is a Divinely appointed order, according to which we are to seek sacramental communion: and if it cannot be obtained, according to that order, Divine Providence does not put it fairly in our way. For communion with the avowed and obstinate opposers of what we justly consider as belonging to the cause of Christ, or to our scriptural profession, would not be that holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God which, according to the Confession, we are bound to maintain: nor would it be a communion with such as duly support the character of those that call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

The communion in the worship of God which, according to this chapter of the Confession, we are bound to maintain is, as you have justly observed, a communion in his instituted ordinances, and in them exclusively of all human devices in the worship of God, or in the government of the church. Hence, according to this principle, we cannot warrantably have communion in the public worship of God, particularly sacramental communion, with those who are open enemies to the form of worship and of church government, which are of Divine institution; and who avow their obstinate attachment to prelacy and superstitious rites in religious worship.

Farther, the comprehension of this communion is to be attended to, as well as the extent of it. "Saints by profession are bound to main-"tain a holy fellowship" in the whole matter of their profession; in public and private duties; in receiving, observing, keeping pure and entire all such worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word. Such a comprehensive profession, though not necessary to lower degrees of this communion, as in relieving temporal necessities, and other services, is always implied in sacramental communion. For our participation of the sacramental ordinance necessarily implies, that all who partake with us make the same public profession of the christian religion; that profession being precisely the matter in which we have communion in the Lord's supper. We are, indeed, to declare our willingness to have sacramental communion with all that profess to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. But we cannot warrantably have sacramental communion with them, on their professing to agree to some things; while they openly and obstinately reject other things, which we justly profess, as belonging to the christian religion. The cause, then, of their not having sacramental communion with us, is not our debaring them from it, but rather, their refusing to accept of it. We cannot give them a dispensation to despise and reject this and the other article of christianity, specified in our public profession; and

without this dispensation, they tell us, they will not communicate with us. In this case, we are persuaded, that God is saying to us from heaven, *Let them return unto you; but return not ye unto them.*

What is now said of the comprehension of this communion, is agreeable to the scriptures quoted by the Assembly, Heb. x. 24, 25: "*And* "*let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works:* "*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of* "*some is.*" Here the apostle is speaking of the communion of the members of the same church making the same public profession. The connection of this exhortation with that in the 23d verse leads us to conclude, that those, with whom the apostle would have the Hebrews to associate, were not persons who denied any article of their christian profession; because communion with such was likely to be an occasion of that wavering, which the apostle here prohibits, with regard to every article of their profession, however non-essential it might be reckoned. *He* certainly considered professors as in danger from the communications of such persons, 1 Corinth. xv. 33. Another of these texts gives us an account of the practice of the primitive christians, Acts ii, 42: "*They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellow-* "*ship; and in the breaking of bread, and in prayer.*" According to these words, they with whom the first christians had sacramental fellowship, were such as continued in the apostle's doctrine, not only in some essential parts of it, but in the whole of it. The other texts refer to that sort of fellowship, which lies in relieving the necessities of the poor; about which there is no controversy.

The advocates for what is called catholic communion often speak as if these words of the Confession, "*Which communion is to be extended* "*to all those, who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus,*" were to be understood without any limitation, of all who *profess* to call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Thus, they represent the Westminster Assembly as teaching us, that we are bound to have sacramental communion with Arians, Socinians, and other gross heretics; because they all, in their several ways, call on the name of the Lord Jesus. This is a gross abuse of the character and meaning of that assembly. We cannot do justice to this passage of the Confession, unless we understand the phrase, "*Calling on the name of the Lord* "*Jesus*" in the scripture sense. It is often used to denote invocation and prayer. But 1 Corinth. i. 2, and in some other places, it is descriptive of the character of persons, who profess a cordial and firm adherence to the name of Jesus Christ; that is, to the whole display that he has made of himself in his truths and institutions. Hence, a particular church may justly decline sacramental communion with such as openly and obstinately deny any of the truths or institutions of Jesus Christ; as, in respect of that denial, they are deviating from the character of those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

§ 57. *Alex.* The opposers of catholic communion distinguish between church communion and the communion of saints; or as they sometimes express it, christian communion. By the first, they understand communion with a church in her social character; as organized under a particular form of doctrine, worship and government. By the second, they understand that communion, which subsists between christians as individuals simply, without reference to their church com-

munion at all. This distinction seems to be erroneous and hurtful. It is indeed somewhat extraordinary, that the communion of a church made up of visible saints, of christians, should not be the communion of saints; and that the confession of faith, which treats professedly of the church of God, should not contain one syllable on that momentous topic, her communion. The little compend, commonly called the Creed of the Apostles, was current in the christian world without the clause, *communion of saints*, until the end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century. It was then inserted, in order to maintain the principle of the union and communion of the Catholic church, against the schismatical doctrine and conduct of the Donatists. Thus it is clear, that the phrase, *communion of saints*, was originally so far from signifying what is now called *christian communion* in opposition to *church communion*, that it signified exactly or nearly the reverse: that is, it not only comprehended, but strictly and properly expressed, and was put into the creed for the purpose of expressing, church communion.

In this sense, it was handed down to posterity, and understood at the Reformation; as might be shewn, by adducing passages from the Helvetian Confession, the Confession of Basil, the Strasburgh Confession, the Bohemian Confession; and from the writings of celebrated divines, such as Calvin, Davenant, Usher, Baxter. Even the excellent John Brown of Haddington, speaking of the Seceders, who left their parishes in the established church of Scotland, says, "In vain "you told them, that their withdrawment was a breaking up of the "communion of saints. They challenged you to prove, that the obe-"dience of Luther and Calvin to the call of God, to leave the church "of Rome, amounted to a breaking up of the communion of saints." But the communion, from which Luther and Calvin withdrew, was certainly church communion: therefore, Mr. Brown himself being judge, *church communion* is the *communion of saints.**

Ruf. The proposition, that *church communion* or sacramental communion may be called *eminently* the communion of saints, was never denied, I suppose, by any who regard the Lord's supper as his ordinance, excepting by some very extravagant writers in defence of the Romish church, who have represented the church as a society, which is constituted and supported on principles of carnal policy; and which, according to these principles, might subsist without any real saints at all. But though all church or sacramental communion, which is according to the word of God, belongs to the communion of saints; it does not follow, that there is no communion of saints or of christians, but what is *properly* termed church communion. It seems neither agreeable to scripture nor reason, to assert, that there is no communion of saints in that prayer and that spiritual conference, which are often necessary, in order to our attaining a judgement of charity, concerning persons, that they are saints; and therefore necessary, in order to our church or sacramental communion with them. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch had christian communion, before Philip proposed the terms, upon which the Eunuch was to be admitted to baptism. But, before those terms were proposed and agreed to, it could not be said with propriety, that there was church communion between them.

* Plea, &c. pages 225—246.

It is evident, that the Westminster Assembly, in the chapter of which we have been speaking, do not limit the communion of saints to church or sacramental communion. They speak in general terms, of the duties both public and private, belonging to this communion; and of the obligation that saints are under to these duties; first, from their union to Christ; and secondly, from their profession. It will not be asserted, by any considerate person, that the saints have no communion with one another, in the worship of God, and in other spiritual services; no communion in relieving each other in their straits and afflictions; while they are not admitted to sacramental communion; or while they are justly under church censure. It is not denied, that according to our Confession, church or sacramental communion, is to be extended to all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus; that is, who are willing to make that profession of his name, of his truths and ordinances, which the church warrantably requires according to his word. This is taught here by the assembly, in opposition to the Novatians, Donatists and Brownists, who excluded all from their fellowship, that had not given positive proofs of their regeneration. They also teach, that church members in different and distant parts of the world, have communion with one another in maintaining the same profession of the faith, the same worship and order, according to the word of God. We have no local peculiarities in our religion. But with respect to the particular order, according to which the Westminster Assembly judged that church communion ought to be regulated, it is to be learned from their chapter on church censures, from their form of Presbyterial church government, and from their Directory for public worship; an order which can never be reconciled to that latitudinarian communion, which is the great idol of the present generation.

With regard to the passages of the public confessions, and of the writings of the divines to which you refer, it is unnecessary to enter into a particular consideration of them. It is sufficient to observe, that the design of these passages, is to assert the communion of all saints, as members of the catholic church; and that that communion is eminently declared and enjoyed in their participation of the Lord's supper; positions, which those, who oppose this scheme of catholic communion, are very far from calling in question. It is obvious, that these passages cannot have any bearing upon the point in question, but, on the supposition, that the act of declining the sacramental communion of any particular church, is in itself, or without any consideration of the grounds of it, a declining of the communion of the catholic church; an absurd supposition, of which enough has been said already.

§ 58. *Alex.* There had been published, by the joint authority of the French and Dutch churches, a Harmony of the reformed confessions, digested under distinct heads: so that whatever is contained in the several confessions, on any one subject, was gathered into one chapter of the Harmony. And it was compiled for the very end of shewing to the world the concord of Protestants, not excepting the Lutherans, in all matters which ought to form the bond of union and communion; and thus to repel the reproach of the Papists, that they were separated from each other as much as from Rome. This book was translated into

English and published in London, 1643, during the sitting of the Westminster Assembly; and not only so, but allowed by public authority. This public authority, was lodged by parliament in June 1643, for the department of Theology, in the hands of twelve divines, seven of whom were members of the assembly: who would not have licenced a book containing any thing materially at variance with an important doctrine as received by themselves. The assembly itself, in an official letter of Nov. 30th, 1643, to the Belgick, French, Helvetian and other reformed churches; styling them, *right reverend and dearly beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, our much honoured brethren;* subscribed by the commissioners of the church of Scotland, among whom were the ever famous and venerable Samuel Rutherford and George Gillespie; stating, that the object of the assembly was to commend to our Zerubbabels, the political rulers, such a platform, as may be most agreeable to God's sacred word, nearest in conformity to the best reformed churches, and to establish unity among ourselves. That the Westminster Assembly and the evangelic interest generally were desirous of bottoming the communion of the church upon the broad foundation of the common faith, without regard to minor differences, is one of the most incontrovertible facts in ecclesiastical history. To the proofs already produced I shall add some more out of a multitude. The first, I produce, is, that Mr. Neal, in his history of the Puritans, tells us, that the English Anabaptists in 1644, were more exposed to the public resentment, because they would hold communion with none but such as had been dipped. This shews, that, in the judgement of the Calvinistic churches at that time, neither difference in the government of the church, nor as to the subjects and mode of baptism, were valid reasons for breaking up communion: and therefore error either in respect of church government, or in respect of the subjects and mode of baptism was then reckoned less blameable in itself, than the refusing of sacramental communion on account of it.*

Ruf. Permit me, Alexander, to offer some remarks upon your quotations as you go along. It has been already shewn, that the ground, which the Confessions of the Reformed churches afforded them for sacramental communion with one another, was not such a harmony, as latitudinarians suppose to have been the ground of their communion, that is, a harmony in some parts only of christianity, which are reckoned essential; but a harmony as to the subjects and mode of baptism, and in a great measure as to church government, and other points, not reckoned essential; a harmony according to all that they had attained. There was no opposition stated in the Confession of any one of these churches, even as to minor truths or duties really contained in the holy scriptures, and exhibited in the public profession of any other of them. The foundation of their sacramental communion with one another was far broader than that of latitudinarian communion. The truth of this observation is much confirmed by the assembly's letter to the Reformed churches on the continent; since the platform recommended in that letter is no other than the whole confession, the whole form of church government, and the whole directory for public worship, which the assembly afterwards exhibited. As to the passage of Neal about the Anabaptists, it seems to be of little consequence. What are

* Plea, &c. pages 251—256.

we to understand by the public resentment? It might be the resentment of some other erroneous sects, such as the Antinomians and Libertines. It does not appear, that they who considered exclusion from the communion of the Anabaptists as worse than their errors about the subjects and mode of baptism, were members of the Westminster Assembly or Presbyterians. Mr. Bailie in his letters, speaking of the Independents, says, "The most of their party are fallen off "to Anabaptism, Antinomianism, and Socinianism."* In another letter, "We hope shortly to get the Independents to declare them-"selves either to be for the rest of the sectaries, or against them. If "they declare against them, they will be but a small inconsiderable "company; if for them, all honest men will cry out upon them for "separating from all the Reformed churches to join with Anabaptists "and Libertines."† In another he says, "Sundry officers and elders "are fallen from the Independent way to Antinomianism and Ana-"baptism." It is, indeed, well known, that the Anabaptists at that time were far more remarkable for their gross errors, than they are at present. These errors, and not their excluding others from their sacramental communion, excited the resentment of Presbyterians against them. Hence Mr. Bailie ranks them with the Antinomians and Socinians. Hence he represents the Independents as in danger of bringing an odium upon themselves by taking such steps as would lead them rather to join with the Anabaptists than with the Reformed churches. Mr. Bailie, as I formerly observed, writes, that Dr. Goodwin exposed himself to the public resentment by the laxness of an opinion he expressed concerning church communion. On the contrary, Mr. Neal relates, that the Anabaptists exposed themselves to the same resentment by their strictness. If the resentment meant be that of the members of the Westminster Assembly or of the Presbyterians, it is surely necessary to prefer the testimony of Mr. Bailie who was a member of the assembly, with regard to what was the prevailing sentiment on church communion at that time.

§ 59. *Alex.* The second proof I offer is from a book published by the provincial synod of London in 1654, five years after the termination of the assembly, entitled, *Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelici*; or the Divine Right of the Gospel Ministry. The ministerial portion of the committee of that synod, at its first meeting in 1647, were all members of the Westminster Assembly. One of them, Mr. Jeremiah Whitaker, had a chief hand in composing their work. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude, that they not only knew, but expressed the sentiments of the Westminster divines. In their preface, speaking of the different sorts of men, whom they then had to deal with, they say, to use their own words: "A fifth sort are our reverend brethren of "New and Old England of the congregational way, who hold our "churches to be true churches; though they differ from us in some "lesser things. But we profess, that this disagreement shall not hin-"der us from any christian accord with them in affection; and that "we shall be willing to entertain any sincere motion that shall further "a happy accommodation between us. The last sort are the mode-"rate, godly Episcopal men, that hold ordination by presbyters to be "lawful and valid; and that a bishop and a presbyter are one and the

* Bailie's letters, vol. 2, page 24. † Ibid. 142.

"same order of ministry; and yet hold, that the government of the "church by a perpetual moderator is most agreeable to the scripture. "Though herein we differ from them; yet we are far from thinking, "that this difference should hinder a happy union between them and "us. Nay, we humbly conceive, that it will not be well with England, "till there be an union endeavoured and effected between all those, "that are orthodox in doctrine; though differing among themselves "in some circumstances about government."*

Ruf I cannot say I entirely approve of the extenuating expressions concerning the difference between Presbyterial church government and the opposite schemes of Diocesan Episcopacy and Independency. The difference is essential: the consessions of the more moderate Episcopalians and Independents involve them in manifest inconsistency; but do not amount, in either of them, to a candid renunciation of their error. Some of the former sort, who allow, that a bishop and a presbyter are of the same order, when they plead for any sort of prelacy in good earnest, strenuously maintain, that, in a settled state of the church, no government can be regularly exercised even by preaching presbyters, without a bishop at their head. Some of the latter sort, that is, of the Independents, speak of their having ministers and elders, and of the usefulness of synods in some cases; and yet they obstinately maintain; that the government of these officers is confined to the time they are presiding and keeping order in a meeting of the congregation; and that they have no authority without the bounds of it. Both parties deny, that any authority to rule in the catholic church is committed to presbyters as such by the head of the church, but either in conjunction with a bishop or with the body of the christian people. So that it seems improper to say, that the difference between Presbyterians and these parties is only in some circumstances. But as to the substance of your quotation, I can see nothing in it, that countenances your catholic scheme of communion. The amount of what is here said is, that we are to regard these parties with cordial affection, according to the conformity to the word of God that we see in their profession and practice; and that Presbyterians have a fairer prospect of attaining a warrantable sacramental communion with them, than with some other parties. In the passage you have recited, sacramental communion is not expressly mentioned; and it is implied, that there ought to be a previous union in order to sacramental communion. Whereas the scheme of catholic communion contended for, requires no previous union in order to sacramental communion with the Episcopal and Independent churches.

§ 60. *Alex.* My third proof is from the prevailing sentiment of the Independents. The ministers and messengers of above one hundred congregations met at the Savoy, Oct. 12, 1658; and adopted substantially the doctrines of the Westminster Confession. They agreed, that churches consisting of persons sound in the faith and of good conversation, ought not to refuse communion with each other; though they walk not in all things according to the same rule of church order; and that, if they judge other churches to be true churches, though less pure, they may receive to sacramental communion such members of

* Plea, &c. pages 257, 258, 259.

those churches as are credibly testified to be godly, and to live without offence.

Dr. Owen, whose influence in that synod is conceded, maintains, that such a communion of churches is to be enquired after, as from which no true church of Christ is or can be excluded. "However," says he, "we plead for the rights of particular churches, yet our real "controversy with most in the world is for the being, union, and com-"munion of the church catholic, which are variously perverted by "many, separating it into parties, and confining it to rules, measures, "and canons of their own finding out and establishment."

Had the Presbyterian government, adds he, been settled at the restoration of king Charles the second, by the encouragement and protection of the practice of it, without a rigorous imposition of every thing supposed to belong thereto, or a mixture of human constitutions; if there had any appearance of a schism or separation continued between the parties, I do judge, they would have been both to blame. For, as it cannot be expected, that all churches and all persons in them should agree in all principles and practices belonging to church order; nor was it so in the days of the apostles, nor ever since, among any true churches of Christ: so all the fundamental principles of church communion would have been so fixed and agreed on between them, and all offences in worship so removed, as that it would have been a matter of no great art absolutely to unite them, or to maintain a firm communion among them. When Dr. Owen admits, that the Presbyterians and Independents did not agree in the Westminster Assembly, he means, that they did not agree in a scheme of public ecclesiastical union.

As peace between nations, says Mr. John How, infers commerce; so among christian churches, it ought to infer fellowship in acts of worship. I wish there were no cause to say, this is declined, when no pretence is left against it but false accusation. Whatsoever mistake in judgement, or obliquity in practice, can consist with holding the head, ought to consist also with being of the same christian communion. And indeed to make new boundaries of church communion is to make a new christianity, and a new gospel, and new rules of Christ's kingdom. It is to confine salvation, in the means of it, to such or such a party; to make the Lord's table lose its name, and be no longer so called, but the table of this or that church, constituted by rules of their own devising.*

Ruf. A candid consideration of these passages will discover little or nothing in them that really favours the scheme of catholic communion now pleaded for. When the independents adopted their Confession of Faith, it does not appear, that they offered sacramental communion to open and obstinate opposers of any scriptural article of it. And the admission of persons were not so, whatever opinions they might have had of church order or of other things, was no example of this scheme of the catholic communion in question. I am far from saying, that persons are to be rejected for their not having attained the same measure of knowledge with other members of the church; while they are not avowing an obstinate opposition to any article of the church's public profession; and while they are willing to go for-

* Plea, &c. pages 259—266.

ward in reformation. So far we may agree with the Savoy Assembly in their proposal of receiving such as are sound in the faith, notwithstanding difference of attainment. Their language about not refusing communion with other churches, proceeded from their erroneous notion about their congregations or assemblies for public worship, being so many distinct Independent churches. While we hold the Presbyterial, to be the only scriptural, constitution of the christian church, we reject the division of it into Independent churches. But as to the occasional sacramental communion of the members of one of these Independent congregations with another adhering to the Savoy Confession, it could be no example of the scheme of catholic communion under our consideration. For whatever diversity there might be among these congregations on some points of church order; there was no stated opposition in the public profession of any of them to any article of the scriptural profession of another.

With regard to the being, the union, or communion of the catholic church, there is no way of ascertaining how far any religious society adheres to it, but by the marks proposed in the Confessions of the Reformed churches, which we have already considered. These marks are to regulate the communion of every particular church. This is the only way to guard against what Dr. Owen justly censures in a particular church; the confining of her communion to rules, measures and canons of men's finding out and establishment. Nor do I disapprove of his observation concerning what would have been the probable consequence of the settlement of Presbyterian government at the restoration of Charles the second by the protection and encouragement of the practice of it without enforcing it by civil penalties; namely, that it would have united some of the different parties; especially, the pious Independents with the Presbyterians, in a firm communion. But this would have been a communion of people cordially adhering to one confession of faith, to one directory for public worship, and to one form of Presbyterial church government; a communion quite the reverse of your mongrel catholic communion of people who may be of the most opposite professions and practices in all things, excepting the few things you call essentials.

The design of the passages, you have quoted, seems to have been, partly to oppose the use of the coercive measures of the civil magistrate in matters of religion; and partly to censure the humanly devised rites and ceremonies, the approbation of which was made a term of communion in the church of England. Hence Dr. Owen speaks of the rigorous imposition of things supposed to belong to Presbyterial government, or a mixture of human constitutions; and Mr. How, of the Lord's table being made the table of this or that church constituted by rules of their own devising. But if the public profession of a particular church be no more than a simple declaration of the truths and institutions of the Lord Jesus, and particularly among others of such as are despised and rejected by the present generation, surely in that case, it could not be a rule of human devising for the church to require her members or those who have communion with her, to accede to her whole profession? For he requires the same thing.

I am persuaded, that many of the pious Independents would have considered sacramental communion with those, who treat any one

article of a scriptural profession with open contempt, as greatly dishonouring to our Lord Jesus. What then would they have said of a scheme which recommends sacramental communion with those who treat not only one, but many articles of such a profession, in that manner?

§ 61. To represent Dr. Owen, as favouring this scheme of catholic communion, is to represent him as grossly inconsistent with himself. He says in one of his treatises, "Though a church, or that which pretends itself on any grounds so to be, do not profess error in doctrine or be guilty of idolatrous practices in worship; yet if that church do not, will not, or cannot reform itself, there is a sufficient ground of separation from such a church."*

In another work, he has these words: "Causeless separation from established churches, walking according to the order of the gospel (though perhaps failing in the practice of some things of small concernment) is no small sin; but separation from the sinful practices and disorderly walkings, and false unwarranted ways of worship in any, is to fulfil the precept of not partaking of other men's sins."†

He says, "Where there is, in any church taught or allowed, a mixture of doctrines or opinions, that are prejudicial to gospel holiness or obedience, no man, that takes due care of his salvation, can join himself to it. For the original rule and measure of all church communion is agreement in the doctrine of truth."‡

§ 62. *Alex.* My fourth proof is from the sentiments of Presbyterians at or near the time of the Westminster Assembly. Dr. Manton protests against the breaking off church fellowship and making rents in the body of Christ because of difference of opinion in smaller matters, when we agree in the more weighty things. We are to walk together so far as we are agreed, Philip. iii. 16. The only lawful grounds of separation are three. 1. Intolerable persecution. 2. Damnable heresy. 3. Gross idolatry. Mr. Richard Vines a member of the assembly, in his treatise of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, has a chapter on this question, Whether a godly man may and ought to hold communion in the ordinances of God with a congregation, where men visibly scandalous in life and conversation are mingled with the good? or whether this mixture does not pollute the ordinances, and the communion to the godly?—There are degrees of corruption; the doctrine may be corrupted in some remote points, *hay and stubble upon the foundation;* of the worship, in respect of some rituals or rites of men's invention or custom:—I must in such cases avoid the corruption, hold the communion. Yet I do not account it separation, if a christian hear a sermon or receive the sacrament in another congregation.||

Ruf. Such passages of our eminent divines, declaring the evil of separation cannot well be pressed into the service of your scheme of catholic communion: for as your catholic communion is occasional, it supposes separation; extenuates the evil of it, and tends to continue

* Enquiry into the nature and constitution of Evangelical churches, page 209.

† Rules of walking in church fellowship, Rule V.

‡ Guide to church fellowship and order, chap. iv.

|| Plea, &c. pages 267, 268, 269.

it. According to this scheme causing division and offences in the church of Christ, unless they be such as refer directly to the essentials of the christian religion, is no great evil; it may pass without censure, and is no hindrance to the most intimate church communion; that is, to sacramental communion.

I own, it seems hard to understand these words of Mr. Vines: *I must in such cases avoid the corruption, hold the communion.* If, by the rites of men's invention, he means rites used as a part of public worship, and, by communion, joining with others in that worship; how could he avoid these rites and yet hold the communion, or join in the public worship of which they were a part? But it appears from the terms, in which Mr. Vines proposes the question of which he treats, that what he designs to teach is, that the personal faults of fellow-worshippers do not pollute the ordinances to the godly; as the Brownists asserted. So that if these rites or customs were only personal faults, and no part of the worship publicly professed by the particular church in which they were used; and if another congregation in which Mr. Vines allows christians to hear a sermon and receive the sacrament be a congregation whose public profession is known by these christians to be not contrary to any one scriptural article essential or not essential, of their own public profession; then I have no objection to the words of Mr. Vines.

It may be observed, that there seems to be a want of precision in Dr. Manton's account of the grounds of separation: for I suppose Dr. Manton would not have denied, that real idolatry, though not gross; and real heresy, hazarding salvation, even though not the most damnable; if maintained in the public profession of a particular church, and obstinately persisted in, after many remonstrances and testimonies have been given against it, may at last be sufficient ground of withdrawing from the sacramental communion of that church. Dr. Owen's representation of the grounds on which the communion of a particular church may be warrantably declined, is much more intelligible. But with regard to some of the quotations from the writings of divines on this subject, we may observe, That, as before Pelagius appeared in the world the primitive fathers used some unguarded expressions concerning man's natural ability and free will; so eminent divines may have been more unguarded in some expressions about church communion, before the latitudinarian scheme prevailed, and before its baneful influence appeared so much, as it does in the present age.

Alex. Mr. Richard Baxter thus writes: I do not lay so great a stress upon the external modes and forms of worship, as many young professors do. I have suspected myself, as perhaps the reader may do, that this is from a cooling and declining from my former zeal. But I find, that judgement and charity are the causes of it, as far as I am able to discover. I cannot be so narrow in my principles of church communion, as many are. If I were among the Greeks, the Lutherans, the Independents; yea, the Anabaptists, (that own no heresy, nor set themselves against charity and peace) I would hold sometimes occasional communion with them as christians, (if they will give me leave, without forcing me to any sinful subscription or action,) though my most *usual* communion should be with that society, which I thought most agreeable to the word of God, if I were free to choose. I cannot

be of their mind, who think, that God will not accept him that prays by the common prayer book, or who use extemporary prayers. These are admirable principles, admirably expressed, worthy of the man, whom, bishop Wilkins being judge, it was honour enough for one age to produce; and who could say, as he said to a friend, I can as willingly be a martyr for love, as for any article of the creed.*

Ruf. Mr. Baxter has been called a Presbyterian; but it is evident, that he did not entirely agree to presbyterial church government. He says, that he hoped for agreement with the moderate sort of Episcopalians, who hold episcopacy to be "necessary to the well being, but not "to the being, of the ministry and church."† He appears to agree to bishop Usher's plan of episcopacy, that there should be a bishop or constant president over so many pastors.‡ He says, I disliked the Presbyterian order of lay elders, who had no ordination, nor power to preach, nor to administer sacraments. He speaks of the Presbyterians as binding the magistrates to confiscate or imprison men.‖ It is hardly conceivable, that Mr. Baxter could be ignorant, that such binding of the magistrates does not belong to presbyterial church government: he must have known that presbyterial church government was exercised, by Cartwright and those who joined with him, without the countenance of the civil magistrate. He says, he kept the town and parish of Kidderminster, and the most of Worcestershire from taking the Solemn League and Covenant.§ Nor did he approve the Westminster Confession of Faith, as a term of communion, or as a part of the intended uniformity of religion in Britain and Ireland. This appears from a curious passage of his life related by himself: "The "bookseller," says he, "who was going to print the works of the "Westminster Assembly, having made me know, that some reverend "ministers desired me to write an epistle recommending the works of "that assembly to families, I wrote one; but required him to put it "into other men's hands, to publish or suppress according to their "judgement; but to be sure, that they printed all or none. The book-"seller got Dr. Manton to put an epistle before the book; in which "epistle he inserted mine as mine, without naming me: But he left "out a part, which, it seems, was not pleasing to all. When I had "commended the catechisms for the use of families, I added, that I "hoped, the assembly intended not all, in the long confession and "those catechisms, to be imposed as a test of christian communion, "nor to disown all that scrupled any word in it. If they had, I could "not have commended it for any such use, though it be useful for the "instruction of families."¶

Dr. Manton knew well, that the words which he left out, were intended to censure the real design of these forms of sound words; which was to exclude, from the sacramental communion of the church, every avowed and obstinate opposer of any of the scriptural doctrines therein exhibited. This is what Baxter invidiously calls imposing as a test and disowning all that scrupled any word. This learned and laborious man certainly deviated greatly from the Protestant doctrine

* Plea, &c. pages 270, 271.

† Necessarium ad bene esse ministerii et ecclesiæ, sed non ad esse. Life of Mr. Baxter, written by himself, page 149. ‡ Page 192. ‖ Page 142. § Page 64. ¶ Page 122.

of justification by faith only, in representing the gospel as a new law, promising eternal life upon condition of sincere obedience to its precepts; and in teaching, that in our justification before God, faith is to be considered not only as a mean of receiving the righteousness of Christ, but as including obedience. He agreed with the scheme of universal redemption, broached and propagated by Cameron and Amyraldus in the Reformed church of France; the spread of which was one of the first things, which brought that church, once so eminent in purity, into a declining state; from which it does not appear that it has ever recovered. Some have thought, that this doctrine differs little from that which was established by the synod of Dort. But, as Mosheim justly observes, "such persons do not seem to have "attentively considered, either the principles from whence it is deriv-"ed, or the consequences to which it leads. The more, says he, that "I examine this reconciling system, the more am I persuaded, that it "is no more than Arminianism or Pelagianism artfully dressed up "and covered with a half transparent veil of specious but ambiguous "expressions; and this judgement is confirmed by the modern fol-"lowers of Amyraldus, who express their sentiments with more "courage and prespicuity, than the spirit of the times permitted their "master to do."*

Mr. Baxter states his opinion concerning the terms of church communion in these words: "I think this is all that should be required of "any church or members (ordinarily) to be professed: In general, I "do believe all that is contained in the sacred canonical scriptures, "and particularly I believe all explicitly contained in the ancient "creed; and I resolve upon obedience to the ten commandments, and "whatever else I can learn of the will of God. And for all other "points, it is enough to preserve both truth and peace, that men pro-"mise not to preach against them or contradict them, though they sub-"scribe them not."†

As to this plan it may be observed: 1. That the practice of latitudinarian communion is not agreeable to it; for when Presbyterians and Episcopalians and Pædobaptists and Antipædobaptists have sacramental communion together according to the catholic scheme, they do not, they cannot promise not to contradict one another. 2. That sacramental communion cannot on this plan be refused to the grossest heretics, such as Arians and Socinians; for as this plan is opposed to an orthodox confession of faith, it must be understood of the mere words of scripture even in opposition to the true sense of it. It is true, that when this was objected to Mr. Baxter, he said those heretics ought to be called to an account for contradicting or abusing the truth, to which they had subscribed.‡ But it is evident that this answer is a mere shift and nothing to the purpose: for they cannot be convicted of any heresy without charging them with contradicting the sense of scripture: a charge, which they could reject as easily as they could reject an orthodox confession of faith. The justice of trying them by the sense of scripture is evidently given up in setting aside confessions of faith; and it cannot consistently with this plan be resorted to.

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. IV. page 247.

† Life of Baxter, page 198. ‡ Ibid.

3. That the reasons, which would warrant a church to require an approbation of what is called the apostle's creed, would warrant them to require an approbation of the Westminster Confession: the former is of no more authority than the latter. 4. That this scheme tends to bring all testimonies for truth, all condemnation of errors as contrary to the word of God; nay, all preaching and instruction as it lies in giving the sense of scripture, and not a mere repetition of the words or syllables, into contempt: for, according to this scheme, a person may disregard all these, without being liable to any church censure.

Though I would not agree to all the great swelling words, which some have used in expressing their admiration of Mr. Baxter; yet I have too much esteem for him as a zealous christian, a laborious minister, and in some respects an useful writer, to suppose that he would have desired us to follow him any farther than he followed Christ: so I think we are as little to follow him in his indigested, latitudinarian scheme of communion, as in his Neonomian doctrine.

It may be added, that however zealous Mr. Baxter was for the latitudinarian scheme of communion, yet he did not go so far as some of our more modern advocates for it do in charging such as decline it, with separating from the communion of the catholic church, and in asserting, that we cannot decline the sacramental communion of a particular church on account of obstinacy in corruption or backsliding, without unchurching that church. On the question, Whether it be our duty to seek peace with the Anabaptists, he observes, That there is a peace of actual communion in the worship of God as members of the same particular church: This, he says, we owe not to every christian; though sincere in the main.* On another question, he says, The same act, (as coming to common prayer or sacrament in the churches) might become a duty to some men and a sin to others, by the diversity of their stations, relations, pastors, churches, occasions, circumstances.† If Mr. Baxter means, that, though the joining in what was erroneous or superstitious in the common prayer and the mode of celebrating the sacrament used in the established church of England was really sinful, yet it might become a duty on the accounts he mentions; the truth of the affirmation cannot be admitted. It shews, however, that he did not impute the consequences just now mentioned to the refusal of latitudinarian communion.

Alex. The divines who were members of the Westminster Assembly seem to have entertained the same opinion with Mr. Baxter as to the freedom of church communion. For notwithstanding all their complaints of the abuses and corruptions of the established church, they nevertheless, after the year 1660, when Charles the second was restored, continued in her fellowship. They offered, as a plan of accommodation with the Episcopalians, archbishop Usher's model of primitive episcopacy, the chief feature of which is, that, without destroying the distinctive titles of archbishop, bishop, and presbyter, as known in England, they might be conjoined in the government of the church; a bishop being perpetual president in the ecclesiastical assemblies made up of presbyters. They offered, that the surplice, the cross in baptism, and kneeling at the communion, should be left indifferent. They were content to set aside the Assembly's Confession, and to let

* Baxter's Life, page 181. † Part 2d, page 283.

the articles of the church of England take place with some few amendments.

Many Presbyterian ministers, after they had been ejected for non-conformity, held communion with the established church of England in her public ordinances.

Samuel Clarke, unable to subscribe the act of uniformity, laid aside his ministry, and attended the church of England both as a hearer and as a communicant. Zachary Crofton, a warm advocate for the Solemn League and Covenant, while a prisoner in the tower for his non-conformity, attended the chapel service; was against separation from the parish churches; and wrote a Plea for communion with the established church. John Farrol, an humble, peaceable, laborious divine, when ejected for non-conformity, used to go to the established church, as his people also did; and either before or after doing so, to preach in private. Daniel Poyntell, so remarkably blessed in his ministry, that he had scarcely a prayerless family in his parish, used, after his ejectment by the Bartholomew act, to hold ministerial fellowship with the establishment, preaching after the order of the church of England to his old flock at Staplehurst. Mr. Ambrose and Mr. Cole of Preston declared, that they could read the common prayer, and should do it: and twenty ministers, before whom they made this declaration, approved their proceeding. Joseph Alleine, though he suffered long imprisonment, because he would not cease from his ministry after his ejectment; yet often attended the worship of the parish churches and encouraged his people to do so. Anthony Burgess, a member of the Westminster Assembly, after his ejectment, lived in a very cheerful and pious manner, frequenting and encouraging the ministry of the conforming clergymen. George Hopkins, a Presbyterian, after his ejectment, frequented the parish church with his family, received the holy communion, and did all things required of him as a lay member of the church of England. These ministers were disposed to be one with every body that was one with Christ. They abhorred a close and narrow spirit, which affects or confines religion to a party. They thought that no more conditions should be made for the communion of the churches than Christ has made for communion with *him*; and that nothing should be made necessary to christian communion but what Christ has made necessary, or what is indeed necessary to one's being a christian.

§ 63. *Ruf.* These and similar common-place expressions may be used either in a true or false sense. We are often misled by first taking such propositions for self-evident truths, and then applying them in an erroneous sense to a particular subject. It is true, that we should be one with those that are one with Christ, if it be understood of their state, and of all those things in which they are one with Christ; but it is false, if it be understood of things in their profession and practice in which they are not *one* with *him*, but are chargeable with declining from the rule of his word. We should be one with Aaron the saint of the Lord; yet we are not to be one with him in the making of the golden calf. That we are to abhor a close and narrow spirit, that confines religion to a party, is true, if it mean, that we are to beware of judging persons not to be in a state of grace, or not accepted with God in what they do according to his word, merely upon the

ground of their belonging to such a party. But it is most false, if it mean, that they who hold the truth in their profession, may never be reduced to a few; while the great body of professors are involved in error and corruption. In the fourth century, the profession of the truth concerning the Deity of Christ was for a time confined to Athanasius and a small party that adhered to him; while, as the judicious Mr. Durham observes, many eminently godly men were, out of infirmity, at last brought to subscribe to the way of the Arians. It is true, no more conditions should be made for the communion of churches, than Christ has made for communion with him; if it be understood in this sense, that nothing should be a condition or term of communion in the churches, but what belongs to the appointed means of promoting our communion with him. But it is false, if it means, that a church should not require of her members any thing, without or before which a person cannot have any communion with *him:* for a church must always require a public agreement to her scriptural confession of the truth, a public acknowledgement of public offences, in order to sacramental communion with her: but these things rightly performed, are rather effects of communion with Christ, than previous conditions of it: and, in some cases, persons may have communion with Christ without them. That nothing should be necessary to church communion but what Christ has made necessary to the well-being of a christian is true: but that nothing should be necessary to church communion but what Christ has made necessary to the being of a christain is false. For a church must require baptism in order to communion at the Lord's table; and yet baptism is not necessary to the being of a christian. A church must require upright walking according to the truth of the gospel of all her communicants; and yet that the being of a christian may continue, as in the case of Peter,* while in some respects he is not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, cannot be denied. The use of such phrases to express a judgement of charity concerning the general character of persons and churches, and the ground we have to hope for their reformation, may be right and commendable; but when they are used, as we have reason to be apprehensive is often the case, in order to extenuate some acknowledged evil, and to evade the necessity of holding some revealed truth or duty in opposition to that evil, they are of hurtful and dangerous tendency.

§ 64. With regard to the instances, you have adduced, of Nonconformists having sacramental communion with the established church of England, it may be observed, that, as the Westminster Assembly seem to have had no view of an occasional communion between churches of different and opposite public professions in the same local situation or on terms different from those of fixed communion: so it does not appear, that the Presbyterian non-conformists in the reign of Charles the second had any such notion.

But an opinion seems, then, to have prevailed among them, that it belonged to the civil magistrate to establish the true religion. Even the ingenious author of *Rectius Instruendum* allows the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. "To preserve," says he, "the "worship of God in purity, and his worshippers in peace, is a flower "which adorns the royal diadem more than all its own diamonds and

* Gal. ii. 11, 14.

"rubies." They seem to have carried this matter too far; and to have thought it unwarrantable, to separate, from a Protestant Episcopal church, when established by the civil magistrate. This opinion was manifestly erroneous: for no sanction of the civil power could make any thing in the public profession of the church, or in the worship of God, lawful, which is (as they had a few years before declared prelacy and the ceremonies of the established church to be) contrary to his word. This error, led some of these ejected ministers to desist from preaching the word of God; and others, who preached occasionally, to decline the dispensation of the Lord's supper; and also, to join in the communion of the established church.

To attempt to justify their conduct, in respect of their proposal to leave the surplice, crossing in baptism, and kneeling at the Lord's table indifferent; to set aside the Assembly's Confession, and to establish in its place the articles of the church of England, would be in vain. When the Westminster Confession of Faith was formed, a considerable progress was made in the reformation of the church of God in England and Scotland: ministers and people were bound by the command of God, to hold fast what they had attained, and to carry on the good work which had been begun. These nations were also bound to all the reformation they had attained by the oath of God, into which they had entered. Nothing could be more absurd than the attempts that were sometimes made to reconcile the Solemn League and Covenant to their compliances with the hierarchy and superstition which these nations were bound by that covenant to eradicate. Some have said, that the Solemn League and Covenant could not bind any to an adherence to the confession of faith, form of presbyterial church government, and directory for public worship; because these formularies were not then composed. This would have had some colour of reason, if they had not precisely corresponded with what was sworn to; that is, if they had not actually exhibited the several parts of reformation mentioned in that covenant, a confession of faith, a form of church government, a directory for worship, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches; in opposition to popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism and profaneness. But this correspondence was evident and undeniable; and therefore these nations were bound, by that covenant, to adhere to the whole of the reformation described in these forms of sound words. While that was the covenanted reformation, it is plain, that the falling away from any part of it, was an open violation of that covenant.

Nor do I understand how their refusal of conformity to the established church can be reconciled, either with the terms on which they professed to conform, or with their occasional communion with that church in her public ordinances. I have no conception of a warrant for communion with any church *one sabbath*, which would not be a warrant for communion with it *every sabbath*, as Divine Providence affords opportunity.

I know it was said, that though they could not join as ministers with the established church, on account of the subscription required of them as such; yet they could join with it as private members. But if the conformity of the ministers was sinful, how could it be justifiable in others, to hold communion with them under the character of

ministers persisting in and publicly avowing that sinful conformity? How could private christians do so without partaking of the sin of the ministers?

The terms on which they offered to conform to the established church, seem to be quite irreconcileable with their former profession. They had often declared the worship of the established church, according to the liturgy and canons, to be superstitious and sinful: how then could they consent to join in that worship? They had professed and taught, that presbytery is the only form of church government appointed in the word of God: and how could they afterwards submit to prelacy, which they had found to be only a human invention? They had also professed and taught, that it was unlawful for the civil magistrate, to assume to himself the power of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and therefore that the king's ecclesiastical supremacy was a sacrilegious usurpation: how then could they own that supremacy, exercised in prohibiting some, and appointing others, to preach and administer the sacraments when, and where, and how he judged proper?

They had solemnly avowed, that the reformation of England, according to the Westminster Confession of Faith, directory for public worship, form of presbyterial church government, being no more than what the word of God requires, was indispensably necessary: how then could they agree to set all these pieces of reformation aside, and acquiesce in what was far short of, and, in some respects, contrary to them? Was not this to deny, what they had before professed, that such reformation was necessary? Such wavering and inconsistency, would be highly blameable even in worldly things of any importance; but must be unspeakably more so, in the matter of a religious profession. The truth is, both England and Scotland were, at this time, deeply involved in apostacy and perjury. To this day, these evils have never been duly acknowledged by the British nation: and yet, without an acknowledgment of them, we have no good ground to expect a thorough reformation there. Without an acknowledgment of these evils, they are holding fast deceit, and refusing to let it go; refusing to return to the Lord.

Nothing seems to have contributed more to precipitate both England and Scotland into this enormous guilt, than the unfaithfulness of ministers. Their sinful compliances encouraged the profane, wicked rulers in their nefarious design of breaking down the carved work of reformation; induced the more ignorant to walk willingly after the commandments of the rulers; and damped the resolution and efforts of many, who were well affected to the cause of God and truth. There were, however, a few ministers, both in England and Scotland, who dared to exercise their office without submitting, as others did, to the unwarrantable restrictions and limitations of their rulers. Some of them, particularly in Scotland, loved not their lives unto the death for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.* These refused to have communion in public ordinances, not only with prelatical ministers, but even with the accepters of indulgences or licences from the civil power, to exercise their ministry under certain limitations. The Informatory Vindication, which certainly contains the genuine

* Revel. vi. 9.

principles of church communion, held by the sufferers for the cause of Christ in that period, declares, that they could by no means own or countenance the administrations of the indulged ministers; because they considered the indulgence, in any of the forms in which it was granted by the civil power, as derived from the supremacy claimed by that power in ecclesiastical matters; as laying the office of the ministry under unwarrantable restrictions; and as tending, in a great measure, to suppress and bury the covenanted reformation.* How much more would these sufferers disapprove such direct compliances as these which you have mentioned?

§ 65. *Alex.* John Claude, in his Defence of the Reformation, which received the official sanction of the church of France, agrees with the advocates for catholic communion; condemns the practice of declining sacramental communion with churches on account of errors or superstitions of less importance. The points, says he, which divide the Papists and Protestants, are not points of simple discipline; nor simply scholastic questions, which consists in terms far removed from the knowledge of the people; nor crimes nor accusations purely personal; nor even a general corruption of manners, though it was very great in the clergy in the days of our fathers. The articles which separate us are points which, in our view, trouble, essentially, the faith whereby we are united to Jesus Christ; points which alter, essentially, the worship we owe to God; which damage, essentially, the sources of our justification, and which corrupt the means, internal as well as external, of obtaining both grace and glory. In a word, they are points which we believe to be altogether incompatible with salvation. There are some other points held by the Papists, in which we readily perceive there was error and superstition to correct, but which were not sufficient to cause a rupture of communion: such as the question about the Limbus of the ancient fathers, Christ's local descent into hell, the distinction between presbyters and bishops by Divine right, the observation of lent.†

Ruf. With regard to the official sanction of the churches of France, it may be observed, that at the time referred to, these churches had lost much of their former purity by the spread of erroneous opinions, such as those of Amyraldus and Pajonius, and by the relaxation of their discipline. This decline is alluded to by the collector of their acts, in the following pathetic expressions: "O," says he, "that the generation which succeeded the first Reformers had not relaxed the reins! how happy might they have been! In the morning of the Reformation they were fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. The greatest princes of France submitted their necks to the golden yoke of Christ."‡

I am far, however, from denying the excellence of Mr. Claude's Defence, and even from censuring the passage which you have quoted. But I may observe, with regard to this and other quotations to the same purpose, that they respect the question concerning the grounds of a lawful secession: whereas the question, which we are now considering, is, Whether churches and their members that are already

* Informatory Vindication, Head iv. † Plea, &c. pages 289, 290, 291.

‡ Quick's Synodicon, Introduct. page 16.

separated, on sufficient grounds, from any particular church, may, notwithstanding the continuance of these grounds, have sacramental communion with that church? In this view, the greater the evils which this and the other passages, which you have quoted, represent as necessary to justify a secession from any particular church; the more do such passages militate against your scheme of catholic communion: because the greater these evils are, on account of which you have justly separated from a particular church, your sacramental communion with that church continuing in the same state, is so much the more manifestly inconsistent and impure. This consideration is sufficient to shew, that the quotation from Mr. Claude's work is nothing to your purpose. It seems unnecessary to say any thing more of this quotation; especially considering what was formerly observed concerning our secession from the church of Rome. But the regard due to the character of the excellent author, and to the important subject of which he treats, lead me to observe one or two things more, in vindication of this passage.

In the first place, it was necessary for Mr. Claude, in shewing the necessity of secession from the church of Rome, to set his argument in as strong a light, as matter of fact would bear; and therefore it was requisite for him not only to state, in general, what might render secession from a corrupt church warrantable; but to shew the peculiar weight and urgency of the cause of secession from the church of Rome; to shew how she *had subverted the article of justification by faith in Jesus Christ;* and how grossly she *had corrupted the means*, both *internal and external, of obtaining grace and glory;* to shew, that, though in respect of her acknowledgment of the scriptures,—of the Trinity and other heads of christian doctrine, and in respect of the godly, who may still be within the pale of her communion, she may, in a lax sense, be called a church of Christ; yet, in respect of her damnable doctrine, and habitually corrupt administration, she is rather to be accounted a synagogue of Satan. But, from the enormity of corruption which in the case of the church of Rome, rendered secession from her peculiarly necessary, it does not follow, that a less degree of corruption in any particular church, obstinately persisted in, and openly justified, after the ordinary means of reclaiming her have been used, may, in no case, render secession necessary. There is a greater necessity of withdrawing from the communion of an Arian or Socinian church, than there is of withdrawing from the church of Rome itself; yet we may not infer from thence, that we might have safely continued in the church of Rome. In like manner, notwithstanding the greater necessity of secession from the church of Rome, than from another church less corrupt, yet it will not follow, that we may safely continue in the communion of the latter. In the second place, when Mr. Claude says, *That the Limbus of the ancient fathers, the local descent of Christ to hell, the distinction between presbyters and bishops by Divine right, and the observation of lent*, would not have caused our separation from the church of Rome, he is to be understood as speaking of the state of things at the rise of the Reformation. These errors and superstitions were not the *gravamina præcipua*, the evils that were first attended to, and chiefly insisted on by the Reformers; such as the merit of good works, the Pope's indulgences, the sacrifice

of the mass, unwritten tradition, the worship of saints, purgatory, the supremacy of the Pope. This is the obvious meaning of Mr. Claude's expression, which is, that these errors and superstitions were not the things that actually had such influence as to effect a rupture* of communion. But the case was different, after our ancestors had attained farther knowledge of the scripture doctrines, in opposition to the errors and superstitions mentioned in this passage of Mr. Claude's Defence, and after they had adopted those doctrines as articles of their confession and testimony. In that case, they could not consistently have had sacramental communion with such as openly professed and maintained those errors and superstitions. Mr. Claude says, in the same treatise, "That the obligation that lies upon the members of the same "particular church to hold communion with those, with whom they "are externally bound, is not without its bounds and measures: we "are joined together under certain conditions." According to this doctrine of Mr. Claude, when the declared conditions of sacramental communion in a particular visible church are no other than such doctrine and order as is justly deduced from the scripture, no avowed and obstinate opposer of any article of that doctrine or order can reasonably expect, that she will admit him to her communion; because, as Mr. Claude observes, the members are joined together under certain conditions.

§ 66. *Alex.* What shall we say to a public deed of the church of Scotland, placing church communion explicitly upon principles common to the reformed churches? It is an act of the general assembly, entitled, Act concerning the receiving of strangers into church communion, and baptising their children; passed May 1711. This act, directs all ministers to shew all tenderness to persons educated in other Protestant churches, who have come, or may come, to reside in Britain, when they apply for the benefit of sealing ordinances; and, particularly, when such strangers, being free from scandal, and professing their faith and obedience to him, shall desire baptism to their children, to comply with their desire, upon their engaging to educate their children in the fear of God, and in the knowledge of the principles of the reformed Protestant churches.

This act was passed for the purpose of receiving strangers into their communion; they continuing strangers, and not accounting themselves plenary members of the church of Scotland. For, about the reception of a person wishing to become such member, and giving due satisfaction as to his principles and character, there could be no scruple in her ministers, and no necessity of an act of the general assembly, to secure due tenderness. Men are not apt to be harsh in their treatment of decent applicants for admission into *their* church. This act contemplated and provided for the reception of such strangers into habitual communion. It distinctly specifies their *residing* in the country as strangers. It does not contemplate a case of *extraordinary* and *transient* fellowship.

In order to this regular habitual church communion, it does not require of these strangers an approbation of all or any of the peculiarities of the church of Scotland, but simply a christian character; and a promise to educate their children, not according to the standards of

* Qu' n' alloient pas jusque a pouvoir causer une rupture de communion.

the church of Scotland; but according to the principles of the reformed Protestant religion. So that from this act it appears that the church of Scotland, at this time, had communion with strangers, who did not even pretend to join that church as complete members; and required nothing as a term of full communion with her, but what was common to the principles of the reformed Protestant religion; and that a member of any reformed church in any part of the world, not acting unworthy of her profession, was entitled, upon that ground, to an equal participation in her sealing ordinances with her own members.

Ruf. In order that I may understand your remarks on this act of the general assembly, I wish to hear your answer to two questions. One is, What are the peculiarities in the principles to which the members of the church of Scotland profess adherence different from the principles of the reformed Protestant religion? For my own part, I am ignorant of such peculiarities; and I know that it has been usually stated, as the ground of the church of Scotland's dissent from the church of England, that the profession of the latter, with regard to prelacy and ceremonies in religious worship, is different from the principles of the reformed churches. That the principles of the church of Scotland are nothing different from those of the reformed churches, appears from the view we have taken of the harmony of their confessions. Churches may have different formularies without any real difference in doctrine, worship, discipline or government. It is neither said, nor necessarily implied, in the assembly's act, that ministers were bound to admit strangers, who publicly professed a determined opposition, in any of these respects, to the principles of the church of Scotland.

The other question is, How a person can be received into regular, habitual, full communion with any church, and to an equal participation with the members in her sealing ordinances, and yet not be a member of that church? In the late disputes between Great Britain and the United States, we heard a great many florid harangues about expatriation, and about the necessity which persons are under of remaining aliens in any other country than that which gave them birth. But the opinion, that christians, not liable to censure either in profession or practice, should remain aliens or strangers, and not complete members, in any part of the christian church, where they have a stated residence, and are admitted to sealing ordinances, appears to me new and strange doctrine indeed. It is true, they are called strangers in the act of the assembly: but this seems only to respect the circumstance of their being newly arrived in Britain from some foreign country; or it may be said, with respect to their character rather in the state than in the church, in which there is neither Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free.

I cannot say I see what necessity there was for this act of the assembly; as I know of no particular dispute between the church of Scotland and the reformed churches on the continent. Only it seems probable, that it was occasioned by the great resort, at that time, of the French refugees to Britain as well as to other Protestant countries; and it is well known how agreeable the reformed church of France had once been, in doctrine and discipline, to the church of Scotland.

I may add, that there is nothing in the act allowing ministers to admit to their sacramental communion any avowed and obstinate enemy to Scotland's covenanted Reformation.

§ 67. *Alex.* Any answer, that I could give to your questions, would be only a repetition of what has been already said concerning the confessions of the reformed churches, concerning the import of communicating with a particular church, and concerning church hospitality; all which particulars have been already proposed to your consideration. But I may quote a few words of Mr. Dunlop, an eminent minister of the church of Scotland, in his preface to the Collection of Confessions. "There is," says he, "no act of the assembly, nor even of "any inferior church judicature, establishing the confession of faith a "term of christian communion, and requiring an assent thereto from "christian parents, in order to their being admitted to all the privi-"leges of church communion: and farther, that no person, that ac-"quaints a minister, that he is of a contrary opinion to some articles "of the confession of faith; and that he can neither profess his own "belief of them, nor engage to educate his children in them, would "therefore be denied access to the sacrament of baptism." Such were the views and practice of the church of Scotland, so early as the year 1719, when Mr. Dunlop's preface was published.

Ruf. Notwithstanding the eminence of Mr. Dunlop, as a minister and writer, I cannot see how an admission of persons to sealing ordinances, who refuse their assent to some articles of the confession, is consistent with the act of the assembly approving it. For, according to that act, the confession is received and adopted, not only as judged to be most orthodox and grounded on the word of God, but as a principal part of the intended uniformity in religion, and as a special means for the more effectual suppression of errors and heresies. It is obvious, that the confession cannot answer these important ends, while this mode of admission to sacramental communion obtains; for, if one person be admitted to full communion, without assenting to some articles of the confession, another person may be admitted without assenting to others; a third cannot be refused the same indulgence; nor can it be consistently refused to a fourth, a fifth, or to any number that may desire it. On this plan, the confession can be no means either of keeping error out of the church, or of promoting uniformity of religious sentiments among her members. Mr. Dunlop's mode of admission to sealing ordinances, is also inconsistent with the solemn declaration which every minister of the church of Scotland makes at his ordination, that he sincerely owns and believes the whole doctrine contained in the confession of faith; and still more with the engagement that he comes under at the same time, to maintain the same whole doctrine to the utmost of his power. Nothing but the abominable casuistry of the Jesuits can pretend to reconcile such a profession and engagement of a minister of the gospel, with his admitting to full communion a person who had plainly told him, that there were some articles of that confession, which he neither believed himself, nor would teach his children to believe; articles which he utterly rejected. Common sense and common honesty would say, that, in doing so, a minister is rather betraying and giving up the doctrine of the confession to its adversaries, than maintaining it.

After all, it may be allowed, that what Mr. Dunlop describes in the words which you have quoted was, at the time when his preface was written, the practice of too many in the established church of Scotland, which was then far gone in defection. "Purity of doctrine," says a faithful witness who was a minister of that church at the same time with Dunlop, "has been the privilege and blessing of this beyond "many of her sister churches. But some of her present circumstan-"ces render her condition more hazardous and susceptible of defec-"tion than heretofore she was wont to be. It is vain to think of pre-"serving the purity of religion in confessions and other standards, "though they should remain untouched; while some sow tares, and "others sleep; while some, by their bold and presumptuous meddling, "corrupt its truth; and others, through negligence, the love of ease "and other biases, overlook all; and few make it their business to "preserve and express its power. It is known, that, of late years, a "root of bitterness, sprung up among ourselves, instead of being stub-"bed up, has been but tenderly cropt; a procedure by which its growth "and spread have been promoted."* This author alludes to the procedure of the general assembly in the case of Mr. Simson, professor of divinity in Glasgow, a few years before.

Alex. We must now come to a conclusion of our review of the history of church communion; which, I hope, has been instructive.

§ 68. *Ruf.* It appears, that in proportion as any church of Christ was studying faithfulness in adhering to the public scriptural profession of her faith; in judicially asserting Divine truth, and condemning the opposite errors, and in holding fast what she had attained, she declined sacramental communion with such as obstinately adhered to any opinion or practice contrary to her public profession. So did the ancient church; so did the Reformed church in France in the beginning of the seventeenth century; so did the church of Scotland in her purest times. On the contrary, they, who opposed the catholic profession of the church in any of its scriptural articles have still pleaded for a syncretism or lax communion. Witness the Arians, who continually upbraided the orthodox with the narrowness of their terms of communion. The Arian leaders pretended that the word HOMOOUSIOS or consubstantial, should not be used in the church's profession concerning Christ's Divinity; because it was an occasion of stumbling to the weak; and was not found in the scripture; and insisted, that all should be admitted to communion, who would acknowledge that the Son was not unlike the Father.† Witness the Socinians, who as Dr. Owen, in his inquiry into the original constitution of the christian church, observes, under a pretence of forbearance, love and mutual toleration, do offer us the communion of their churches; wherein there is some what of order and discipline commendable; yet, says he, it is unlawful to join in church communion with them on

* The Trust; a sermon at the opening of the synod of Merse and Teviotdale in the year 1721.

† Valens et Arsacius ecclesiæ pacem obtineri posse contendebant sine ulla fidei mutatione, modo voces quædam tollerenter, quæ infirmis (ut ipsi aiebant) erant offendiculo, viz. *ousia, homoousia, hupostasis:* præsertim quum istæ voces *autolexei* in sacra scriptura non reperiuntur. Abrogato *consubstantialis* vocabulo, substituerunt vocabulum *similis* et anathema dixerunt omnibus dicentibus Filium esse dissimilem Patri. Forbesii Instructionibus histor, page 4.

account of their pernicious errors. Witness the Arminians in Holland, who declared their willingness to hold sacramental communion with the Socinians on account of their allowing a dissent from the Socinian creed, and their resolution to have no sacramental communion with a church that disallowed a dissent from her public profession. It is unlawful, said they, to live with such, as brethren. They said, it was Satan that first persuaded men to make confessions about things not precisely necessary to be known and believed, for the sake of retaining purity: and farther, they avowed, that the things, necessary to be known and believed, are very few.*

Witness the established church of England retaining in her communion Whiston and Clarke, who denied the scripture doctrine of the Trinity; and many who teach Arminian and other errors contrary to her own articles: Witness the established church of Scotland in that state of declension in which she has continued since her Erastian settlement at the Revolution in 1688; holding sacramental communion with Episcopalians, Independents and other sectarians; retaining in her communion, as public teachers, Arminians and Socinians, against whose errors she was bound by her solemn covenant engagements to contend and testify. Witness the Arminian, Baxterian and Hopkinsian errors, which now attend the fashionable practice of catholic communion in the United States.† Witness the broad basis which is laid for a catholic religious communion in the writings of some, who, under the name of christian ministers, are advocates for deism. "Unity of "sentiment," says one of that fraternity, "suits not the Divine plan of "man's moral improvement. A diversity of religion is better adapted "both for mankind in general and for individuals. The most absurd "and superstitious religions promote the common end of all reli-"gion, peace of conscience and the practice of virtue. All religions

* Primum suadet satanas confessiones de rebus non præcise scitu ac creditu necessariis fieri puritatis retinendæ causa.

The following sentiments are taken from the preface to the Apology of the Remonstrants. Dissensio, say they, sententiarum concordiam non turbabit. Pax vera, quæ in animorum conjunctione sita est, constare ibi non potest, ubi libertas dissentiendi, et libera ac modesta dissensionis professio locum non habet. Error veniam et commiserationem meretur: impietas odium et pœnam. Errantes nusquam e coelo proscribit Deus, impias ubique. Amemus, complectamur, exosculemur eos, quos hactenus sectæ pene omnes impiseabiliter oderunt, fugarunt, proscripserunt, et omni malorum genere affecerunt. Ex adverso, volumus damnari et fugi sectas istas, ubi omnia pene licent præterquam dissentire; ubi fratres et collegæ evissima ex causa, sibi invicem, superbis denunciationibus coelum et inferos decernunt. Non licet nobis cum istis vivere ut fratribus. These who are here said to be hated and proscribed by almost all other sects, and who, according to these apologists, ought to be embraced with the most endearing affection, can be no other, says Triglandius, than the Socinians. Antapologiæ præfatio.

† Some are offended at the use of such terms denoting certain systems or combinations of opinions, for two reasons: one is, that they prejudice people against certain opinions which, before any consideration of them, persons are led by these names to consider as erroneous. But we may as well object to the names which are given to actual sins; because each of them implies the notion of moral evil: and some of these denominations are taken from persons, as Simony. This presumption instead of hindering, may invite us to the examination of the particular actions or opinions to which they are applied. The other reason against the use of these names is, that they may be, and are, sometimes misapplied. But this abuse is common to these with other general names; and the error is to be corrected by accurate definitions and enumerations of the particulars included in the signification of such general name. If it is asked, how these particulars are to be ascertained? we answer, just as the particulars included in the meaning of other general terms are ascertained, by dictionaries, grammars, history, &c.

"lead to happiness, though some by a shorter, safer, and less difficult "road than others."*

§ 69. *Alex.* I cannot say, that I esteem the zealots of any party. The strenuous advocate for a liturgy, and the strenuous enemy of it, are in danger of being alike estranged from the worship of God. The case is the same with the hot contenders for and against the singing of any other psalms in public and solemn worship, than those which we have in the Old Testament. Such also is the case of the hot contenders either for or against kneeling at the Lord's table; either for or against any particular form of church government, whether it be presbytery, prelacy, or independency; either for or against keeping Christmas or Good Friday; either for or against ministers wearing a surplice, when they perform divine service. Anxiety about such peculiarities becomes a substitute for the power of personal religion. Many lay more stress upon such party-coloured threads of ecclesiastical faction, than upon the bond of their union in Christ. We may say of these opposite things, as the apostle said of circumcision, That neither the one nor the other is any thing, but keeping the commandments of God.

Ruf. What would you say to one who should assert, that the case of the hot contenders for the worship of Jeroboam's calves, or against the changes which he made of the day of the passover, and in the priesthood, was much the same with the case of the hot contenders against those things; and that the hot contenders for the traditions of the Pharisees, and the hot contenders against them were alike.

Alex. I would say that the assertion is most false. For the opposite cases of contending for and contending against a manifest breach of God's commandment cannot be alike. It was very wicked in the Abiezerites to plead for Baal. And it would not be much less so, to plead for the idolatry of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, or for those traditions by which the Pharisees made God's commandment of no effect.

Ruf. All human additions to the ordinances of God's worship are manifest breaches of his commandment. But such are the additions you mentioned; the superstitious observation of holy days; kneeling at the Lord's table; singing any other psalms, in solemn and public worship, than those given in that form by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit; humanly devised forms of church government, such as prelacy and independency. It is right to contend against such things, and wrong to contend for them. There may indeed be much wrong in the manner of men's contending against these evils. But, even in that case, the difference between pleading for a good, and pleading for a bad cause remains; and we cannot say they are both alike, without bearing false witness against our neighbour. We have an illustrious example of this truth, in the dispute between Job and his friends; a dispute which was supported, on both sides, with warmth, and even asperity. There was much reprehensible in the speeches of Job, as well as in those of his friends; and there was much excellent doctrine in their discourses, as well as in his. But the two parties were far from being alike as to the matter in debate; which was determined, by God the Judge of all, in Job's favour.† In the days of our fathers, who

* Sketches from modern foreign writers, by Dr. Erskine, page 64. † Job xlii. 7.

were the strenuous opposers of the particular evils you have mentioned? They were such men as Knox, Cartwright, Welsh, the two Melvils, Calderwood, Rutherford, Gillespie, Cargil, Cameron, Renwick, and many other eminent lights in the church of God. Did these worthies find, that they were in danger of being estranged from the worship of God in Spirit and in truth, by an honest upright zeal against the prevalence of such evils as you have mentioned? This cannot be believed consistently with any due regard to historical evidence.

In the present day, when some, in their united capacity, aiming at faithfulness in adhering to their public scriptural profession, have, with all plainness and candour, laid before their brethren the obstructions, which they desire to have removed in order to sacramental communion, they receive no other satisfaction than that of hearing, that the matters of complaint are not essential; that the articles contended for, as advances in reformation, are only doubtful opinions, or the coloured threads of ecclesiastical faction; that a general profession of the essentials of christianity is sufficient to form the basis of church communion; that the churches complained of are churches of Christ; that they have communion with Christ; that they have his Spirit. The complainers have been abundantly explicit in giving reasons why they judge the matters in question to be highly important and necessary to the glory of God and the welfare of souls. But these reasons cannot obtain a hearing; for they are reasons, it is cried, about what is not essential, and therefore must be mere babbling. Such treatment in a worldly business, in which there are any persons who deem themselves much interested, would be generally allowed to be unreasonable and unjust. And why is not the same treatment acknowledged to be so in spiritual things? The reason seems to be, that the spirit of professors in this generation is the spirit of Gallio, which cares for none of these things.

Alex. I wonder to hear you speak so, Rufus. I have not heard of any period in which more zeal for religion was displayed, than the present; particularly, for the circulation of the scriptures, and for having the gospel sent to the heathen nations. Societies are every where formed, and liberal contributions made for these objects.

Ruf. I would by no means detract from undertakings, the objects of which are so laudable and important. It is hoped, that their effects will be beneficial to thousands. But the formation of new societies for sending ministers to the heathens, is so far exceptionable, as it supposes or implies, that the church courts which Christ has certainly authorised and appointed to make such missions, are not competent or sufficient for that business. I may further observe, that if people rest in the things you have mentioned, without any reformation of the church in doctrine, worship and government; if, while they are active in these projects, they grow more secure and insensible of the judgements of God impending over the churches at this day; if testimonies and remonstrances against prevailing errors and corruptions are treated with more contempt than before; we have no reason to consider the present generation of professors as in a reforming state. The Lord's anger is not turned away; but his hand is stretched out still. It is one of the vain imaginations, which have a baneful influence on the

conduct both of individuals and societies, that they may venture to compound with their Maker; presuming, that while they offer him many services, he will spare their beloved idols, and suffer them to go on in some trespasses to which they have been long accustomed, and which in the fashionable language of the present times, consists with holding the essentials of morality and religion. Formerly the erroneous laboured to defend their peculiar opinion or practice with some colour of reasoning. But now they have a summary way of evading all censure or reprehension; namely, by professing an adherence to the essentials of religion; and by representing all who attempt to refute their errors as dealers in toys and baubles. But is not this method like the way of those who make a mock of sin? If the matters in question be at all sinful, the representation of them as trivial, tends to harden those who are saying with regard to their own practice of such things, We have not sinned. God has undoubtedly a controversy with such and with all their abettors. *Thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.**

Alex. The body of Christ is lacerated and mangled, when christians are split into sects. Is there no remedy for so great an evil?

Ruf. Yes; the apostle directs us to one in these solemn and impressive words: *I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgement.* That agreement in the public profession of the doctrine, worship, discipline and government according to the word of God, may be attained by his church is evident from the duty enjoined in this and other passages of scripture;† from the promise of the Holy Spirit as the Teacher of believers:‡ from the promise of such agreement;|| from what was actually attained in the primitive church;§ from the harmony of the confessions of the reformed churches; and from the unanimity that we sometimes see actually attained in particular churches and congregations; where people are stirred up to much diligence in reading and hearing the word and in prayer; and are acquainted with the power of godliness.

While parties continue to make public professions of religion that are contradictory to one another, it seems necessary, that the individuals of each party should have communion in public ordinances with those only who make the same public profession.

1. Because it is only with such that they can have real and sincere communion in public ordinances. For how can the ministers or people of two parties have real communion with one another in the hearing of the word preached, while the one professes to believe what the other professes to disbelieve; while the one considers the minister as by his public profession shunning to declare the whole counsel of God; and the other judges that by the same profession he engages to declare the counsel of God faithfully? How can they have communion in prayer and thanksgiving, while the one considers that doctrine, worship or government as greatly prejudicial or even pernicious to the church of

* Jerem. ii. 35. † 1 Corinth. i. 10. 2 Corinth. xiii. 11. Philip. i. 27. ii. 2. 1 Pet. iii. 8.

‡ John xvi. 13. || Jerem. xxxii. 39. Zephan. iii. 9. Isai. lii. 8. § Acts ii. 42. iii. 32.

God, which the other reckons necessary to her welfare? How can they pretend to glorify God with one mind and one mouth, while they are manifestly of different minds, and make different professions? How can persons sit down together at the sacramental table as one bread, one body, as making only one profession, while they obstinately persist in making many contradictory professions? It is indeed a dreadful mockery of God for people to profess that they are come together to worship God in a social capacity; while they are making other professions which manifestly render them incapable of worshipping him in that capacity.

2. Because, in the case supposed, a separate communion is a necessary mean of preserving soundness in the faith and a pure dispensation of gospel ordinances. It was on this account that the professing people of God under the Old Testament were separated, even by their civil government, from all other nations. But under the New Testament dispensation they are not separated as a body politic from others: they are now *sown among the people;* but ecclesiastic separation, or the separation of the professed followers and witnesses of Christ from such as refuse to be reclaimed from their errors and corruptions, is an appointed mean of preserving his ordinances pure and entire.

Were each of the more evangelical churches faithfully endeavouring to hold fast what conformity to the word of God they have attained in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, and to make progress in reformation; were they duly attentive to testimonies that have been exhibited against remaining errors and corruptions, we would have reason to hope that offences would soon be removed; difference in doctrine and in order would cease. The union of the churches, and sacramental communion, would follow of course.

Alex. In your opinion, then, the sacramental communion of the church ought to be suspended, till they come to be of one mind in every point of doctrine and order.

Ruf. I mean indeed, that while any scriptural article of the public profession of one church is openly and obstinately denied by another; the former ought not to have sacramental communion with the latter. Yet these churches have visible union and communion with one another, so far as they agree with one another and with the word of God in profession and practice.

A Note on § 61, *page* 159.

How far Dr. Owen was from agreeing to the scheme of what is termed *catholic communion*, will appear from the following short abstract of his answer to two questions. The first of these questions is, Whether persons who have engaged to reformation and another way of divine worship according to the word, as they believe, may lawfully attend on the use of the Common Prayer Book in divine worship?

The Doctor answers in the negative for these reasons:

1. Because the attendance of persons, in the case now supposed, is contrary to the general rule given by the apostle in Gal. ii. 18, If I build again the things that I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. But we have destroyed this form of worship; that is, we have omitted it and left it out in the service of the church, as neither divinely commanded nor tending to edification.

2. Because it is contrary to that great rule, *Whatsoever is not faith is sin*, Rom. xiv. 23. No man, therefore, can lawfully attend on this kind of religious worship, but he who judgeth his doing so to be a duty which God requireth of him, and which it would be his sin to omit, when he goes to it.

3. Because it is contrary to the rule delivered in Mal. i. 13, 14, Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick, &c. but cursed be the deceiver who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing. We are obliged by all laws, natural, moral and positive, to serve God always with our best. Wherefore, he that attends on this service avows to God, that it is the best that he has; and if it be not so, he is a deceiver.

4. Because it is contrary to that rule, Let all things be done to edifying, 1 Cor. xiv. 26. For we testify against many things in the Book of Common Prayer, as highly prejudicial to edification.

5. Because it is inconsistent with that sincerity in profession that is required of us. Our public conjunction with others, in the acts and duties of religious worship, is a part of that profession which we make in these acts and duties; and in this conjunction in profession in worship, we do profess that it is such a conjunction as is part of the obedience which we owe to Jesus Christ; a profession directly contrary to that which we make as dissenters.

6. Because such a practice is, in many respects, contrary to the great rule of not giving offence; particularly, it is a justification of the adversaries to the cause wherein we are engaged, and a condemning of those that suffer for their faithful adherence to that cause.

The second question is, Whether the persons before mentioned and described may, lawfully and in a consistency with their former principles and practice, go to and receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in the parish churches, under their present constitution and administration?

The Doctor answers, that they may not or cannot do so:

1. Because, by their so doing, they profess a spiritual incorporation with those with whom, or with that church wherein they do so communicate; namely, That they are one body and one bread with them; and that they all drink into one Spirit; while they do not esteem them so to be.

2. Because they would hereby, not only justify the whole service of the liturgy, but particularly, the ceremonies enjoined to be used in the administration of the Lord's supper. For the rule of the church wherewith they join, is that whereby they are to be judged. Any abatement that may be made in practice, is on both sides an unwarrantable self-deceiving, inconsistent with christian ingenuity and sincerity.

3. Because the posture of kneeling, in the receiving of this sacrament, is a peculiar act of religious adoration, which has no Divine institution or warrant; and is therefore, at best, an act of will-worship not to be complied with.

It is hoped, the reader will excuse the brevity of this abstract; as our limits would not permit the insertion of this excellent passage, so fully, as it is given in Mr. Rankin's Dialogues, from the 2d vol. of Dr. Owen's Sermons.

APPENDIX.

HAVING lately perused a performance on Terms of Communion, by Robert Hall, A. M. a Baptist minister, published in England, and several years ago reprinted in this country, the writer of the preceding dialogues judged, that a short notice of this publication, may tend to throw farther light on the nature and tendency of what is called *catholic or free* communion.

This writer says, page 7, "Wherever purity and simplicity of worship are violated by the heterogeneous mixture of human inventions, we are not at liberty to comply with them for the sake of peace; because the first consideration in every act of worship, is its correspondence with the revealed will of God, which will often justify us in declining the external communion of a church, with which we cease not to cultivate a communion in Spirit. It is one thing to decline a connexion with the members of a community absolutely or simply because they belong to such a community, and another to join with them in practices which we deem superstitious and erroneous."

Remark. The first of these sentences contains a truth very contrary to the scheme, which this performance is meant to defend. But the second tends to misrepresent the state of the question; as if it were a question about communion in Spirit, while it is only about external communion; and as if his opponents did not approve and desire communion in Spirit with all in whom they can discern any evidence of love to the Lord Jesus; and as if it were not the very point in question, Whether our joining in sacramental communion (which, as it is considered in this question, is merely external communion) with those churches and their members, who publicly profess adherence to opinions or practices, which we own, by our public profession, to be superstitious and erroneous, be not both an external consenting to these practices or opinions, and a gross inconsistency with our own profession, as contrary thereto? This writer asserts, that by sacramental communion with such churches and their members, "no principle is violated, no practice is altered, no innovation is introduced;" that is, that in sacramental communion with churches persisting obstinately in such erroneous opinions and superstitious practices, a person makes no other profession, than he does in sacramental communion with a church that testifies in her public profession against these opinions and practices. This assertion ought not to have been taken for granted. The falsehood of it is proved, it is hoped, satisfactorily, in the preceding dialogues.

Pages 47 and 48. "Let it be remembered that the mode in which "we are commanded to exhibit and express the love of the brethren, "is the preservation of union, and a careful avoidance of every temper "and practice, which might produce alienation and division. When "one part of Christ's mystical body refuses to co-operate with another "in a principal spiritual function, such as communing at the Lord's "table, the very evil subsists against which we are anxiously guarded; "and, upon the principle we are opposing, subsists by Divine appoint-"ment."

Remark. This objection against the adherence of a particular church to her own public scriptural profession as the rule of her sacramental communion is very groundless; for the reason why she refuses sacramental communion to the open and obstinate opposers of any article of that profession, is, because that refusal is necessary to avoid alienation and division among her members. For a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. The cause of alienation and division subsists with the opposers of that article: but how absurd is it to say, that it subsists with a particular church, on account of her using the means of Divine appointment for avoiding these evils.

Page 48. "Our Saviour, thoroughly apprized of the diversities of "sentiment, which would arise among his followers, was not detered "by that consideration from praying, that *they might all be one.*"

Remark. As unity in sentiment, or in the belief of Divine truth is, among the followers of Jesus, the foundation of unity in affection; so our Saviour must here be considered as praying for the former as well as for the latter; and, consequently, for the taking away of the diversities of sentiment, as well as other evils, which he foresaw would be among his followers. His prayer, therefore, affords a particular church great encouragement to go on towards perfection in her sacramental communion, endeavouring by all scriptural means to exclude diversities of sentiment among her communicants.

Page 49. "To refuse the communion of sincere christians, is not a "natural expression of christian love; but so diametrically opposite, "that we may fairly put it to the conscience of those who contend for "such a measure, whether they find it possible to carry it into execu-"tion without an inward struggle; without feeling emotions of sorrow "and concern?"

Remark. Those who conscientiously adhere to the scripture rule of church communion, cannot see a person deny an article of their public scriptural profession, without feeling emotions of sorrow and concern; and the greater esteem they have of that person as a sincere christian, their sorrow and concern are the greater, both for the hurt done to his own soul and to the church by his denial of Divine truth. They mourn the evil which renders it necessary to decline sacramental communion with him, but not the act of declining, as it is their duty, conducive to the good of the church, and a necessary reproof to the person himself, which the Psalmist accounted a kindness, and an excellent oil, that would not break his head.

Pages 52, 53. "In Rom. xiv. 1, and xv. 1, 6, 7, we are commanded "to receive persons who are weak in faith. It is certain, that St. Paul "means to designate by that appellation sincere though erring chris-"tians, persons whose organs were not yet attempered to the blaze of

"gospel light and liberty, but who still clung to certain legal usages "and distinctions, which more comprehensive views of revelation "would have taught them to discard. The term *weak* is employed in "1 Corinth. viii. 7, to denote an erroneous conscience. When it is "once admitted that this term comprehends the case of error, it is not "necessary to evince its bearing on the present controversy. All "that remains is the assumption, that the errors and mistakes to be "tolerated are not fundamental, or not of such a nature as to prevent "those who maintain them from being accepted with God."

Remark. What is said in these passages, in the 14th and 15th chapters of the epistle to the Romans, cannot have any bearing on the question about what is called catholic or free communion; unless it means, that some were to be received who were open and obstinate opposers of one or more articles of the public scriptural profession of the church of Christ at Rome. But it does not appear, that the apostle charges either of the parties, whose case is treated of in these passages, with any such opposition. What the apostle charges them with is not any sin or error in their being for or against the observation of meats or days, but only their uncharitable judging or censuring each other; an evil, which he exhorted the church to guard against, and not to tolerate.

I may add, that in the phrase *weak in faith*, the word *weak* does not convey the same notion of positive and culpable error, as when the apostle speaks of the conscience being weak and defiled, 1 Cor. viii. 7. The weak in faith, are to be distinguished from open and obstinate opposers of the faith, and from backsliders. Hence, the apostle is far from speaking of the weak in faith among the Romans, as he does of the backsliding Galatians.

Pages 53, 56. "When the apostle commands christians to receive "each other, and enforces that duty by the example of Christ, it surely "requires little penetration to perceive, that the practice ought to be "commensurate to that example, and that the precept obliges us to "receive all whom Christ has received. He is not received, in the "sense of the apostle, who is denied a reception at the Lord's table."

Remark. We are to distinguish between an example and a rule. In determining who are to be received into sacramental communion, we are to be directed singly by the rule of God's word. The example of Christ, with regard to what became him, is absolutely perfect. But there are many things which it became him as God, and as our Mediator, to do, which we cannot, without absurdity, pretend to imitate. Particularly, it is shewn in the dialogues, that it is absurd to suppose, that he cannot, or that he does not, grant gracious communion with himself to many, with whom it would be unwarrantable for us to join in sacramental communion. Christ's receiving persons into real communion with himself, is an internal secret transaction; and therefore, cannot be a rule to direct us in receiving persons into the external communion of the visible church. Besides this expression, *Receive ye one another, as Christ also hath received us to the glory of God*, does not so properly point out the persons whom we are to receive, as the manner in which we are to receive them. The apostle had already shewn *what persons* were to receive one another: but he now calls their attention to *the manner* in which every one should receive his

brethren, and be received by them. They were to imitate Christ's manner, not so much in receiving others, as in receiving *themselves*, which they knew by a blessed experience. As they had found that Christ had received themselves with tender affection, in the way of forgiving them and bearing their burdens; so they were to receive one another. The apostle then is not, as Mr. Hall supposes, making Christ's receiving others the reason of their receiving them; but only that, while they received others into church communion according to the order appointed in the word of God, they were to imitate the gracious condescending manner in which Christ had received *themselves*.

It may be farther observed, that, in declining sacramental communion on account of errors and other offences, there is a commendable imitation of Christ's way of dealing, in such cases, with his people, whom he receives. For he often hides his face, and withholds the sensible tokens of his favour, on account of their errors and backslidings. *Whom I love*, says he, *I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.* Believers may be said to have a right to the sensible tokens of his love; yet they are not to expect them but according to the order settled in the covenant of grace. In like manner, they have a right to the Lord's table; yet they are not to be admitted to it otherwise than according to the order appointed in the word of God.

With regard to the assertion, that they are not received in the sense of the apostle, who are denied a reception at the Lord's table, it may be observed, that while the term *receive* is not limited to that reception, there are degrees of the privilege meant by it. A person may be received in one degree, and not in another. One may be received to private christian intercourse, who is not yet received to sacramental communion. The duty in general of receiving others into christian communion is enjoined in this text; but in determining the degree of that communion, into which any one is to be received, we must also attend to other scriptures, which declare the order of the church of Christ.

Page 54. "The apostle, after proposing himself as an example of "the renunciation of legal hopes, and the serious study of perfection, "adds, let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, as many as have "obtained correct and enlarged views of the gospel, be thus minded; "and if in any thing, ye are otherwise minded, possessing different "views and apprehensions on certain subjects, God will reveal even "this unto you. *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let "us walk by the same rule; let us mind the same thing.* Here, the "case of diversity of sentiment, arising among christians, is distinctly "assumed, and the proper remedy suggested; which is not the exer-"cise of a compulsory power, much less a separation of communion; "but the ardent pursuit of christian piety, accompanied with a humble "dependance on Divine teaching; which, it may reasonably be ex-"pected, will in due time correct the errors of sincere believers."

Remark. It is granted, that persons of different sentiments, concerning things of an indifferent nature, and concerning points which have never been any part of the church's profession or testimony, and even persons defective in the knowledge of some articles of that profession, while they manifest a willingness to receive instruction concerning these articles, may be admitted to the Lord's table. It is

granted, that, in these cases, the remedy is here suggested; that the Lord will reveal his truth to his people more and more, and bring them to more and more unanimity. It is also true, that their unanimity, in apprehending and maintaining the truths revealed in the holy scriptures, will be imperfect; for no church on earth can say, she is already perfect. But still whatever measure of unanimity has been attained and exhibited in the profession or testimony of a particular church, ought, according to this remarkable text, to be faithfully maintained by that church; and no avowed obstinate opposer, of any one article of that profession or testimony, ought to be admitted to her sacramental communion. This passage teaches us, in the first place, that this unanimity is attained, not by any compulsory power, but by the teaching of the word and Spirit of God: and, in the second place, that the discipline of the church ought to be exercised in maintaining this unanimity, so far as it has been attained, against every open and obstinate deviation from it. For every particular church, and all who partake of her sacramental communion, ought to walk according to the same rule, and to mind the same thing, according to what she has attained. To the same purpose, the churches are charged to hold fast what they have, particularly, the profession of their faith, without wavering; to lose none of the things which they have gained; to buy the truth, and contend earnestly for it.* Hence, there is no evil, for which the church is more severely condemned, than backsliding.

Pages 76, 78. "Whatever is matter of duty, is a part of some whole, "the relation to which is susceptible of proof, either by the express "decision of scripture, or by general reasoning; and a point of prac- "tice, perfectly insulated and disjoined from the general system of "duties, can never be satisfactorily vindicated. Unless I am much "mistaken, the question under discussion will afford a striking exem- "plification of the justness of this remark. If it be found impossible "to fix a medium betwixt the toleration of all opinions in religion, and "the restriction of it to errors not fundamental; I mean such as are "admitted to consist with a state of grace and salvation. When the "necessity of tolerating imperfection is once admitted, there remains "no point at which it can consistently stop, till it is extended to every "gradation of error, the habitual maintenance of which is compatible "with a state of salvation."

Remark. Error, as such, ought not to be tolerated in any part of the church of Christ; and, though in this, as in other respects, perfection cannot be pretended to by any particular church; yet no church ought to suffer any such error to be held or propagated by any in her communion, as would be a manifest denial of any article, fundamental or not fundamental, of her public scriptural profession: for the text just now cited from Philip. iii. 16, requires her to walk according to that profession; while it obliges her to walk according to what she has attained. This is evidently a medium between tolerating all error, and perfect or complete freedom from it; a medium very different from that of tolerating errors not fundamental.

Page 81. "The operation of speculative error on the mind, is one "of the profoundest secrets in nature; and to determine the precise "quantity of evil resulting from it in any given case, (except the

* Revel. ii. 25. iii. 11. Heb. x. 23. 2 John, 8. Prov. xxiii. 23. Gal. i. 6. iii. 1.

"single one of its involving a denial of fundamental truth,) transcends "the capacity of human nature. We must, in order to form a correct "judgement, be not only perfectly acquainted with the nature and "tendency of the error in question, but also with the portion of atten-"tion it occupies, as well as the degree of zeal and attachment with "which it is embraced. We must determine the force of the counter-"acting principles, and how far it bears an affinity to the predominant "feelings of him who maintains it; how far it coalesces with the "weaker parts of his moral constitution. These particulars, however, "it is next to impossible to explore, when the enquiry respects our-"selves: how much more to establish a scale, which shall mark by "just gradations, the malignant influence of erroneous conceptions in "others?"

Remark. This passage seems to be elegantly written; but has little connection with the subject of admission to sacramental communion. When we consider error as hindering us from joining with any in sacramental communion, we do not consider it as in their hearts and consciences, where it can be judged by God alone; but as it is in their public profession; in which case, we may compare it with the word of God, and with the public profession of the church, as according with that unerring rule. Mr. Hall allows, that in one case, the evil of it is plain; that is, when it involves the denial of fundamental truth: but that it is a real evil, is no less evident in other cases, while it involves the denial of Divine truth, and of some particular article or articles of Divine truth specified in the church's subordinate standards. Thus, when the officers of the church find persons openly and obstinately avowing tenets which are both contrary to the word of God and to the public profession of the church, and yet admit them to sacramental communion, they are manifestly betraying the trust committed to them. To see the evil in this case, we have no need to penetrate into the profoundest secrets in nature, or to intrude into those things which we have not seen; but only honestly to endeavour to walk by the same rule, to mind the same thing, to keep the *white line* in view.

Pages 73, 74. "We freely admit the previous obligation of delay-"ing to act till we have *sufficient light*; but in entire consistence with "this, we affirm, that where there is no hesitation, the criterion of "immediate duty is the suggestion of conscience; whatever guilt may "have been previously incurred by the neglect of serious and impar-"tial enquiry. That this, under the modifications already specified, "is the only criterion, is sufficiently evident from the impossibility of "conceiving any other. Hence, it is unquestionably the immediate "duty of persons to celebrate the eucharist, when there is nothing in "their principles to cause them to hesitate about it. They would be "guilty of a deliberate and wilful offence were they to neglect it."

Remark. According to this doctrine, when a person by adopting erroneous principles, and by the neglect of serious and impartial enquiry has got his mind freed from all hesitation about the rectitude of doing something which is really forbidden by the Divine law; then, he has sufficient light for proceeding immediately to act, and whatever guilt might have been incurred *before* by his neglect of inquiry, yet *now* the *only* criterion of his immediate duty is the suggestion of his conscience: there is an impossibility, it is said, of conceiving any

other; and therefore, what he does is completely justified, as being conformable to the only criterion of duty in the supposed case. This is sad casuistry. For in the case supposed, the suggestion of conscience is quite wrong; as that never can be right which is forbidden by the Divine law. Conscience is but a deputy, and must speak truly the will and mind of its Lord, the Supreme Lawgiver; otherwise, it must not be acquiesced in, but remitted to his word, that it may be better informed. An erring conscience, indeed, brings a person into a dreadful dilemma: for if he disobeys it, he sins in despising what he himself takes to be the will of God attested by his deputy. On the other hand, if he obey it, he sins; because what he does is contrary to the will of God revealed in his word. But this deplorable case arises neither from the law of God, nor from the nature of conscience as such, but from the depravity of man's nature, and from the neglect or perversion of the means of its information, which is more immediately the person's sin in this case.

Page 71. "With regard to the error of those who differ from us in "the interpretation of a particular precept, the proper antidote is "calm dispassionate argument; not the exercise of discipline, which "is never to decide what is doubtful, nor to elucidate what is ob-"scure."

Remark. In dealing with the erroneous, we are, no doubt, in the first place, to use calm dispassionate argument as the mean of convincing them of their error. By reasoning, we are to elucidate what is obscure, and to remove doubts. But when such reasoning has been used, and they continue obstinate opposers and contemners of any of the truths of God's word stated in the public profession of the church, censure then becomes necessary. Both these means are to be used, and the one is not to be substituted for the other. Reasoning alone cannot serve in the place of censure; nor censure alone in the place of reasoning. Each of them is to be used in its own place, as cases require.

This author gives a very just view of a lawful secession, in the following words: page 63, "Whenever it becomes impossible to con-"tinue in a religious community, without concurring in practices and "sanctioning abuses which the word of God condemns; a secession is "justified by the apostolic voice, *Come out of her, my people, that ye* "*be not partakers of her sin, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* "On this principle, the conduct of the Reformers, in separating from "the Roman hierarchy, admits of an ample vindication. In conse-"quence of the introduction of superstitious rites and ceremonies, it "became impracticable to continue in her communion without partak-"ing of her sins: and, for a similar reason, the Nonconformists se-"ceded from the church of England, where ceremonies are enforced, "and an ecclesiastical polity established, incompatible as they con-"ceived, with the purity and simplicity of the christian institute."

Remark. It seems unnecessary to add to what has been advanced in the preceding dialogues, on the inconsistency of our having sacramental communion with these churches or societies, from which we are, upon scriptural grounds, in a state of secession. The necessary import of our joining with these churches in public and sealing ordinances, is, that we profess our willingness to join in their communion,

notwithstanding their refusal to reform or turn from the evils, which were the ground of our secession; a profession which is plainly the reverse of what this author allows to be the import of our secession. Our joining with them, therefore, in these ordinances is plainly inconsistent with our state of secession; and is therefore unlawful; while it is our duty to continue in that state.

Some other pleas offered by this writer for his favourite plan of free communion have been considered in the preceding dialogues. It would be improper to enter on any particular examination of his opinions concerning baptism.* But it seems preposterous to contend

* It is admitted, that there was a difference between the baptism of John, and that of the apostles and other ministers of Christ after his resurrection; as the former was before the full manifestation of him as the true Messiah, and the latter after it; and also in this respect, that before the resurrection of Christ, baptism was not indispensably necessary as a sacramental seal of admission into the church of God; whereas after his resurrection, when circumcision was abrogated, it was certainly necessary as such a seal. Before the resurrection of Christ, baptism served to seal men's admission into the church of God with regard to the New Testament dispensation which was then beginning to be introduced; but after his resurrection baptism served to seal their admission into his church absolutely; or, in other words, it was the only sacramental seal of their admission into it. Before the resurrection of Christ, persons were sacramentally sealed as members of the church of God without baptism; but after his resurrection, baptism was the only way in which they could receive that seal. Hence after the resurrection of Christ, baptism became equally necessary as circumcision had been; and all the members of the visible church with their infants are to be baptised. But notwithstanding these differences in respect of the time and the greater necessity of baptism after the resurrection of Christ, than before it; we have good reason to hold, what has been hitherto taught, in the reformed churches in opposition to the Socinians and Papists, that the baptism of John and the baptism administered by the apostles and other ministers of Christ after his resurrection, were essentially, or in substance the same. Both were instituted by Christ and both signified and sealed the same benefits of the covenant of grace. This doctrine is positively denied by Mr. Hall on various pretences: such as, 1st, That "John uniformly ascribes his baptism, not to "Christ, but to the Father." *Answer.* It does not follow from its being of God the Father, that it is not instituted by Christ; for all things that Christ did, as Mediator, were of God by him. 2ndly, That "the baptism of John required only the Jewish faith, the "appearance of the Messiah, with the additional circumstances, that it was at hand. But "the baptism of the apostles required the faith, that Jesus of Nazareth was the identical "person, who was the Messiah." *Answer.* The faith which the truly pious among the Jews had in the Messiah was materially the same with the faith of true believers now: and John directed the faith of those, whom he baptised, to the identical person, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, John i. 29. 3dly, "That christian baptism "was invariably administered in the name of Jesus, while John's was not performed in "that name; for when he began to baptise, he did not know him." *Answer.* The expression *I knew him not*, means, that he had never seen him so as to distinguish his bodily appearance. But he certainly knew the identical person, and baptised in his name, whose forerunner he was, who was preferred before him, whose shoes latchet he was not worthy to unloose. In Acts, xix. 5, Paul says, that John baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. 4thly, That "the baptism instituted by our Lord was distinguished by the superior effects "of it from that of his forerunner," Matth. iii. *Answer.* The opposition stated in that text is not between the external part of John's baptism and the external part of that which was instituted by Jesus Christ; but between the external part, which was performed by John and is performed by any minister of the New Testament, and the internal part, which is the prerogative of Jesus Christ to effectuate. It is granted that a far greater effusion of the Holy Spirit attended baptism as administered by the apostles than what attended John's baptism; but it does not follow that the former was essentially different from the latter. The Lord the Spirit makes the same ordinances more effectual at one time than at another, according to his good pleasure. 5thly, That "if John's baptism had been the "same with our Lord's, Paul would not have administered the latter to such as had alrea-"dy received the former," Acts xix. 5. *Answer.* Of the various opinions of commentators concerning this passage, none that I have heard seems to me more reasonable than that of Beza, Glassius, Waltherus and many other judicious divines; namely, that the words referred to in v. 5, are the words of Paul shewing the disciples at Ephesus, that those who had been baptised by John or according to his doctrine, ought not to have been so ignorant, as these disciples were, of the gift, which was to be bestowed on the church, of the Holy

so strenuously for the necessity of what he calls a free participation of the Lord's supper, while he represents the want of baptism, even in those who reject opportunities, continually afforded them, of obtaining it, as no way blameable, and no bar to the enjoyment of all the other privileges of the visible church. Surely baptism is no less necessary than the Lord's supper; and, in the scriptural order of these ordinances, the former precedes the latter. A christian should neither neglect baptism, nor yet receive it after his partaking of the Lord's supper. There is no scriptural warrant either for the one or the other.

Spirit; since those whom John baptised, were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus; of whom John always testified, that he would baptise with the Holy Spirit. The Greek particles *men*, which our translators have rendered *verily* in the beginning of Paul's speech, and *de* in the beginning of v. 5, which ought not to have been overlooked, as it is in our translation, and which might have been rendered *but*, will by no means allow us, says Beza, to break the connexion of this speech, by ascribing the former part to Paul, and the latter part to Luke. Examples of the use of these corresponding particles are common, as in Matth. iii. 11. ix. 37. See the observations of Dr. Guise on this passage. Mr. Hall offers two objections to this interpretation. The first is, "that if John told the people, "that they were to believe on him who *was* to come, this was equivalent to declaring, that "he had not yet manifested himself; while the baptising in his name as an existing indi-"vidual, would have been to affirm the contrary." But to this it may be answered, that, as Christ's incarnation had actually taken place many years before the ministry of John, so that eminent minister himself believed, and exhorted the people to believe on Christ as a person then subsisting in human nature: and the people might then be baptised in his name, as well as believe in him as such. Mr. Hall's second objection is, "That the rela-"tive pronoun, according to the interpretation in question, is referred to an antecedent at "the distance of three verses, and that the 5th and 6th verses, are closely connected by the "word *and*, in the beginning of the 6th verse." But to this it is answered, that it is obvious to any attentive reader, that the sense or connexion of a passage often requires the relative to be referred, not to the nearest, but to a more remote antecedent; Thus in Luke v. 17, the pronoun *them* at the end of that verse is not to be referred to the pharisees and doctors of the law, but to the sick mentioned in v. 15. In Matth. xvii. 27, the same pronoun refers to an antecedent in v. 24. With regard to the word *and* in the 6th v. of the passage under consideration, it is obvious, that according to the sense in which this word is often used in scripture, it may here signify only that in consequence of Paul's speech to these disciples at Ephesus, he laid his hands on them, and the other things here related concerning them took place.

ALEXANDER AND RUFUS;

OR

DIALOGUES ON CHURCH COMMUNION.

PART SECOND.

In which the communion of the secession church is explained and vindicated.

Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.—*Jude.*

Separation is not schism, if it be from those, however many, who, though they have the essentials, and even more than the essentials of a church, are drawing back from the duty and integrity which have been attained, and which the scripture enjoins us to hold fast.—*Mr. Forrester in his Rectius instruendum, part third, chap.* i.

ALEXANDER AND RUFUS.

PART SECOND.

In which the communion of the secession church is explained and vindicated.

DIALOGUE I.

Of the incidents which occasioned the secession of some ministers from the established church of Scotland....Their secession a native consequence of their protestation....The good things done by the general assembly in 1734 and 1736, insufficient to remove the causes of the secession....The conduct of some esteemed more faithful ministers towards their seceding brethren, not justifiable....The declinature of these brethren warrantable....The objection against this secession, from the case of several churches reproved in the New Testament, answered....The corruptions of (what may be called in a large sense) a true church of Christ, in some cases, sufficient to warrant a secession from her communion....The case of the saints continuing within the pale of the Old Testament church, when in a most degenerate state, considered....A church's not imposing sinful terms of communion, not always sufficient to warrant our entering into, or continuing in her communion....A secession, on scriptural grounds, consistent with a due regard to the unity of the church of Christ....The injustice of ascribing the principles of the Novatians, Donatists, and, in later times, of the English Brownists, to the seceding ministers....The conduct of the faithful ministers in the period between 1596 and 1638, and that of the protesters in 1650, precedents for the conduct of the seceding ministers....Divisive courses not countenanced by this secession.

Some people in the neighbourhood of Alexander and Rufus, having joined the communion of those Presbyterians called Seceders, had formed a worshipping congregation. This event led Alexander to desire some farther information concerning the principles of the Seceders, than what he had received from the reading of Mr. Willison's Impartial Testimony. Rufus was well qualified to afford him that information; for he had carefully perused the Judicial Testimony of the Associate Presbytery, the Defence of Reformation Principles, by Mr. William Wilson of Perth, the Declaration and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, and various other publications, serving to explain and vindicate the principles of the secession church.

Having studied the Secession Testimony with accuracy, he could find nothing stated as an article of it, but what was either expressly taught in the words of scripture, or deducible from the words of it by necessary consequence. Hence, he was now engaged in a most serious enquiry concerning the duty of joining in the communion of the associate body. Such was the state of his mind, when, having occasion to call at Alexander's house, the following conversation took place.

Alexander. Rufus, I have observed, that, of late, you speak more favourably than usual, of the Seceders.

Rufus. I must own, that while I adhere to the received principles of the church of Scotland, as they are exhibited in the Westminster confession of faith, the form of presbyterial church government, and directory for public worship, together with the solemn covenants that were entered into for the maintaining of these principles, I find myself unable to preserve consistency in disputing against the Seceders.

Alex. I suppose no man was better affected to the received principles of the church of Scotland than Mr. Willison, whose praise is in all the churches, and whose piety, the Seceders themselves, though he was a great opposer of their secession, will not dare to call in question. His account may be depended upon; he knew them well, and all the transactions between them and the church of Scotland.

Ruf. The Seceders, I believe, are far from wishing to detract from the just reputation of Mr. Willison. There are several of his treatises, such as that on the Sanctification of the Sabbath, and the Afflicted Man's Companion, which they often recommend. It is well known, that, before the secession of these ministers from the established church, Mr. Willison joined with them in bearing testimony against the corruption of the prevailing party. But, after that event, he complained that they had left him and other honest ministers, in the communion of the established church, to struggle with that party. These ministers, on the other hand, complained that he would not come forth to help them; when they, for no other cause than their steadfast adherence to the received principles of the church of Scotland, had been cast out of its communion by the corruption of the judicatories, and had been reduced to the necessity of a secession. He said, (perhaps rather uncharitably,) that these ministers having precipitately seceded from the national church, became engaged in honour to persist in their separation and might not they have said with as much reason, that Mr. Willison, having taken the side of the judicatories against his old friends, considered himself as bound in honour to persist in his opposition to them? But if we sincerely desire to know whether the cause of Christ and truth was on the side of the judicatories of the established church, or on that of the ministers who seceded from them, we are no more to give a blind or implicit credit to the assertions of Mr. Willison, than to those of the Seceders. In order to understand the ground of the secession, it is necessary to attend to those proceedings which gave occasion to it.

Alex. I wish, Rufus, to hear a short relation of these particulars; though I am not unacquainted with Mr. Willison's account of them.

§ 1. *Ruf.* In complying with your request, I shall endeavour to be as concise as is consistent with a just representation of this affair.

In the year 1731, the general assembly of the church of Scotland had an overture before them concerning the method of planting vacant churches, directing ministers not to be chosen by the congregations; but to be imposed upon them by the majority in a meeting of land holders and elders; and allowing all land holders to be admitted as voters in that meeting, under the simple qualification of being protestants. This overture was transmitted to the several presbyteries, that they might return their opinion to the next assembly, whether it should be turned into a standing act. At the next assembly, which was in May, 1732, it was found that the greater part of the presbyteries were absolutely against it. At the same time two representations were offered to the assembly: one by forty-two ministers; the other by upwards of seventeen hundred christian people; both of them remonstrating against this overture and various other things. But these representations were not allowed so much as a hearing. Though there were so many presbyteries against the overture; yet the assembly turned it into a standing act, without any material amendment; refusing, at the same time, to take any notice, in their records, either of a dissent from this act, or of a protest against it, which had been offered by several ministers and elders, members of the assembly.

In October following, Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, one of these dissenters and protesters, preached a sermon at the opening of the synod of Perth and Sterling, from Psal. cxviii. 22, in which he gave a plain testimony against various public evils, particularly, against this act of assembly, and the proceedings of the church judicatories in the violent settlement of ministers. For such plain dealing he was judged censurable by a majority of the synod. This judgement was dissented from by Mr. Alexander Moncrief of Abernethy and by Mr. William Wilson of Perth; while Mr. Erskine and Mr. James Fisher of Kinclaven protested and appealed to the next general assembly. The synod also determined the censure of Mr. Erskine to be a rebuke for the offence he had given by his sermon and an admonition to abstain from the like in time to come. But this sentence was not executed, as Mr. Erskine by the time this determination was made, had gone away.

When the assembly met in May, 1733, they approved the sentence of the synod, and appointed it to be executed at their own bar. Mr. Erskine immediately declared, that he could not submit; and offered a paper for himself and his three brethren; in which they protested against this sentence, and asserted their liberty to preach the same truths, and to testify against the same or like defections on all proper occasions. But the assembly the next day, having found that all the four adhered to their protest, appointed them to appear before the commission* in August next; and ordained, that if they should not then retract their protest, and profess their sorrow for giving it in, they should be suspended from the exercise of their ministry; and that, if they should act contrary to this sentence, the commission would proceed, at their next meeting in November ensuing, to a higher censure. Accordingly, as these ministers still adhered to their protest,

* A commission of the general assembly is different from a committee: a committee is appointed to prepare matters for being determined by the assembly: but a commission determines the matters committed to them; and there lies no appeal from their sentence to the ensuing general assembly.

the commission first suspended them, and afterwards dissolved their relation to their several charges; declaring them to be no longer ministers of the church of Scotland. In November when the last of these sentences was intimated to the four protesters, they read a paper and delivered it to the clerk; in which they adhered to their former protestation: "and therefore," said they, "since the prevailing party, "who have now cast us out of ministerial communion, are going on in "a course of defection from reformation principles, and suppressing "freedom and faithfulness in testifying against the backslidings of the "church; we do, for this and other weighty reasons, protest that we "are obliged to make A SECESSION from them; and that we can "have no ministerial communion with them; till they see their sins "and mistakes, and amend them. And in like manner," added they, "we do protest, that it shall be lawful and warrantable for us, to exer-"cise the keys of doctrine, discipline and government according to "the word of God, the Confession of Faith, and the principles and "constitutions of this church, as if no such censure had been passed "upon us."

About three weeks after they had declared themselves in a state of secession, they constituted a presbytery, which was afterwards known by the name of THE ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY. They still had hopes, that the equity of their cause and the excellence of those reformation principles for which they contended, would be acknowledged by the national church. On this account, though the Associate Presbytery was constituted in the latter part of the year 1733; and though they had frequent meetings for prayer and conference about the situation into which the Lord, in his adorable Providence, had brought them;—yet it was not till the year 1735, that they proceeded to acts of jurisdiction. Then they appointed a committee of their number to prepare a draught of their judicial testimony; which was enacted and published in the following year. Such was the rise of the secession in Scotland.

Alex. Your statement, in general, agrees with Mr. Willison's. Only according to him and others; the rebuke, which the synod of Perth and Sterling appointed Mr. Ebenezer Erskine to receive, was not so much for testifying against the act of the assembly in 1732, and other proceedings of the church courts, as for his manner of doing so. Many of his friends, as Mr. Willison observes, wished that he had not used such asperity and tartness of expression about the ministry and judicatures of the church, as he did.*

Ruf. I cannot help thinking, with Mr. Wilson of Perth,† that this suggestion was an after thought of the ruling party in the assembly to excuse their arbitrary sentence. And a pitiful one it was: for it is plainly inconsistent with the terms of the assembly's act affirming the sentence of the synod; according to which Mr. Erskine was to be "rebuked at their bar for impugning, in his sermon before the synod, "acts of the assembly and proceedings of church judicatories." Mr. Erskine in his protest considers the rebuke tendered to him by the assembly as "having been" not for his manner of expression, but "for

* Willison's Impartial Testimony, page 134. According to the edition printed at Pittsburgh in 1808.

† Continuation of his Defence of Reformation Principles, Chap. iii. Sect. 2nd p. 405.

"things" (that is, the matter of his sermon,) "which he conceived to "be agreeable to and founded upon the word of God and the approved "standards of the church of Scotland;" and asserts "that he should "be at liberty to preach the same truths of God and to testify against "the same or like defections of this church, upon all proper occasions." In like manner, the other three brethren declared their adherence not to Mr. Erskine's manner of expression, but to the matter of his testimony against the act of assembly in 1732; and to his protestation as asserting their privilege and duty to testify publicly against the same or like defections.* According to the supposition of the objection, then, the assembly and their commission had no ground at all to proceed against these four ministers on account of their protestation; as there was nothing in it respecting Mr. Erskine's manner of expression.

Alex. Some have thought, that Mr. Erskine might have submitted to the sentence of the synod or assembly; for unless we allow, that such submission ought to be yielded to church courts, we introduce the independent principle, that no regard is to be had to the determination of a church judicature, unless it be right in our own eyes.

Ruf. It is indeed the opinion of Independents, that though synods or meetings of the office-bearers of the churches may be held on some occasions; yet their power is only that of consulting, recommending, or giving advice. This opinion is justly rejected by Presbyterians; because the church, or assembly, mentioned in Matth. xviii. and 17th v. to which our Lord has given the power of binding and loosing, or of discipline and government with a promise of his gracious presence with them in the faithful exercise of that power, ought not only to remove the offence given by some individuals of a worshipping congregation, but also offences with which whole worshipping congregations may be chargeable, or in which many such congregations may be concerned. Of such general concern was the case referred by the church at Antioch to the meeting of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. It is evident, that the judgement of that meeting was delivered, not merely as a recommendation or advice; but as an authoritative decision: *a decree ordained by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem.* Thus the office-bearers of the church of Christ met in his name are to determine authoritatively, questions about matters of faith and practice, and to inflict censure on the scandalous; and their determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word of

* These four ministers, in a publication of theirs printed in 1734, say, "However it "is now pretended, that it was only for the indecency of expression, that Mr. Erskine "was rebuked; yet, as the act and sentence itself expressly bears, that the matter as well "as manner of expression was condemned both by the synod and assembly; so the chief "managers and framers of the act had no other view of it: for the reverend and honoura-"ble members of the assembly's committee, that were appointed to converse with the "four brethren after their protestation was given in, plainly told them, that it was unjusti-"fiable to speak from the pulpit against any act of assembly, or the proceedings of church "judicatories. And when the brethren replied, that this was an invading of a protestant "principle contained in our *confession of faith*, if ministers were censured for disburden-"ing their consciences as to public church proceedings, which appear to them to be con-"trary to the word of God and to sap the foundation of our church constitution; they "were likewise told, that if they could not be silent from speaking against acts of assembly "and the proceedings of the judicatories, that then they should go out of the church." It does not appear that this account of that committee's conversation with these ministers was ever contradicted by Mr. Carrie, Mr. Willison, or any other of their opponents.

God, but also for the power, whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed in his word. Hence it is allowed, that in private and personal causes, which concern us in our individual capacity only, while there is no imposition on the conscience, we are to submit to the sentences of church judicatures; or at least to acquiesce in those which are in the last resort, even though we do not see the equity of them. For when we have used the means of Divine appointment for obtaining the redress of private and personal grievances without success, we are then to sacrifice our own matters to the peace of the church. In like manner, when the judicatories of the church refuse to adopt the judgement, however sound, of an individual, as a part of the church's public profession, he ought to acquiesce, whilst he cannot pretend, that, what he has advanced has ever before been stated by the church of Christ as an article of her public profession, according to the word of God. The submission, however, which we owe to church judicatories is only in the Lord; they are not lords of our faith or conscience. They have authority to declare and vindicate the truths and ordinances of Christ; but when they pretend to exercise this authority against the public cause of God, against a testimony for reformation principles which the church of Christ has solemnly adopted in her acts and constitutions; to submit silently to such an unjust sentence of a church court and do nothing against it, is to become luke warm, instead of being valiant for the truth; and to favour, instead of opposing, the design of those who are seeking to bury the cause of Christ. If Luther and our other reformers had tamely submitted to the ecclesiastical courts in their time, the reformation would have been crushed in the bud, and we might still have been groaning under the yoke of antichristian bondage. Hence I am apprehensive, that, as christians and protestants, we cannot well insist upon it, that Mr. Erskine's refusing to submit to the sentence of the synod and assembly was wrong; merely upon the ground of the submission due to church authority, which the Lord hath given his ministers for the edification of his people; while that authority, was abused to the purpose of suppressing a testimony against evils tending to destruction.

§ 2. *Alex.* Mr. Willison seems not to disapprove the protest entered by Mr. Erskine and his brethren against the sentence of the commission in November, 1733; and also their appeal to the first, free, faithful and reforming assembly of the church of Scotland. Had they sisted here, adds he, they had done well; but they went a great deal farther by making a secession from the judicatories of this church.*

Ruf. Here I must own Mr. Willison appears to be inconsistent. He does not disapprove their protesting, "that, notwithstanding the "censure passed on them, it should still be lawful and warrantable for "them, to exercise the keys of doctrine, discipline and government;" and yet he condemns their adherence to their protest in continuing to exercise those keys; which they could not now exercise in conjunction with the judicatories which had cast them out. They were now under a necessity of either seceding from these judicatories or of desisting from the exercise of their office. In doing the former they firmly adhered to the resolution declared in their protest; but if they had done the latter, they would have receded from that resolution. Again, he

* Willison's Impartial Testimony, 136.

seems to approve their maintenance of a faithful testimony against the defections of these judicatories from reformation principles; and yet disapproves their secession, when all the ways in which such a testimony could be maintained in a state of communion with the prevailing party, such as by preaching against the public corruptions and by protesting against them in the judicatories, had been made grounds of censure; when petitions and remonstrances against these corruptions could not obtain a hearing; and when such a testimony was become more necessary, than before, by the unjust proceedings of the judicatories in the case of these ministers. Farther, when Mr. Willison does not disapprove their protest, he owns the sentence of the synod and assembly to be unjust; and yet he says, "that truth would not have "suffered, though they had forborne to protest as they did in express "words, against the sentence of the assembly, and against any censure "they should inflict on them, as null and void of itself." If their protest was right; then Mr. Willison should have acknowledged, that it was their duty to enter it in the plainest and most express terms; and that it would have been their sin to have omitted it, or not to have adhered steadily to it. On the other hand, if it was wrong, or if the sentence of the synod and assembly, ought not to have been called unjust; then he should not have said, that they did well in protesting.

§ 3. *Alex.* Mr. Willison thinks, that these brethren ought to have waited on the assembly which was to meet in 1734, before they had made a secession from the judicatories of the established church, and constituted themselves into a distinct judicatory for licensing preachers and ordaining ministers.*

Ruf. The same light, which shewed them, that it was their duty to protest against the sentence of the synod and assembly, directed them to adhere firmly to their protest, and to continue in the full exercise of their office as ministers of Jesus Christ. This, as they were now circumstanced, they could not do without making secession. Hence they were under a necessity of taking that step. Neither Mr. Willison nor any other has shewn, that their case was not, as they have represented it; that is, that they were so shut up in the course of Divine Providence, and saw the path of duty so plainly marked out in the word, that they were not in any doubt about it.† In this case, to have advised with friends, as if they had been uncertain what they ought to do, would have been gross dissimulation, unfaithfulness to the light which the Lord had afforded them, and a sinful conferring with flesh and blood. Mr. Willison thinks, that they might have delayed making a secession, till the next meeting of the assembly. But in the case now supposed, they were rather to imitate the apostle of the gentiles,

* Willison's Impartial Testimony, page 136.

† "Our ordination vows and engagements," say they "oblige us to the several steps we "have taken.—Our submission to judicatories is according to the word of God; and our "received and approved standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline: "These are the only terms of ministerial communion amongst us; and we refuse, that we "have broken through any of them. We have continued in ministerial communion with "what is now reckoned the established church, till they have declared, that they will not "allow us any longer ministerial communion with them. The prevailing party have now "declared, that they will allow none to continue in ministerial communion with them, who "testify, either doctrinally from the pulpit, or by protestation in the supreme judicatory, "against their sinful and unwarrantable proceedings." Review of the Narrative emitted by a committee of the commission of the assembly.

who, on a certain occasion, would give place by subjection, no, not for an hour. If the next assembly should prove a faithful, reforming one, these ministers had nothing to fear on account of their having made a secession from the ruling party who were of a quite opposite character. Mr. Willison ought not to have reproached these ministers with undue haste, in giving up church communion with the ministry of the establishment; for when they first declared themselves in a state of secession, they professed their readiness to hold communion with such ministers of the established church, as were adhering to the principles of the covenanted reformation, and lamenting the contrary public evils. But many who had formerly appeared against these evils, ceased more and more from their faithful testimony against them; nay, they were led to justify, extenuate, or countenance them, by continuing in conjunction with the ruling party, who refused to be reclaimed. So that the communion of the seceding ministers with those of the established church became more and more inconsistent with the testimony which even Mr. Willison allows, it was their duty to maintain; till it entirely ceased about the year 1739. Besides, it should be recollected, that, as was formerly related, though the four brethren were constituted into a presbytery towards the end of the year 1733; yet they did not proceed to any acts of jurisdiction, such as licensing and ordaining candidates for the holy ministry, for two or three years afterwards.

Alex. Mr. Willison tells us, that in the year 1734, though the four ejected brethren declined to represent what they would have the assembly do to satisfy them; yet the assembly empowered the synod of Perth and Sterling to restore them to their charges and the communion of this church; which was accordingly done very soon after the meeting of the assembly, without requiring any acknowledgments from them.* Mr. Willison and others condemned their refusal to return to the communion of the established church, when such a door was opened to them.

Ruf. I wonder how Mr. Willison could represent the assembly as at any loss to know what would have satisfied the four brethren; since they had laid before the commission a particular representation of their grievances. Besides, they had expressed their mind in a *Review* (which they had published some time before the assembly met) of a publication by a committee of the commission, entitled, *a narrative and state of the proceedings against these brethren.* And there is no reason to think that they would have refused, if the assembly had candidly desired them, to give a farther explanation of their mind. When Mr. Willison tells us, that the assembly appointed the synod of Perth and Sterling to restore these brethren to their several charges and to the communion of the church, he ought to have added, that the appointment was accompanied with this express direction, "that the said synod should not take upon them to judge of the legality or formality of the former proceedings of the judicatories in relation to this affair; or either to approve or censure the same." This direction appears at first view unnecessary and unusual; for when the assembly did not repeal their sentence against these ministers, as illegal or informal, it was plain the synod could not repeal it; for an inferior court cannot repeal an act of a superior. But this direction plainly intimated, that

* Imp. Test. pages 138, 139.

the assembly in 1734 would not suffer the legality or formality of that sentence to be called in question; and that these ministers were still considered as criminals, who were favoured with the relaxation of a just sentence for the sake of peace. Thus, it does not appear that the assembly in 1734, allowed that any injustice was done to these ministers by the proceedings of the former assembly. Hence the assembly, in their act passed in the year 1738, concerning the Seceding ministers, speak of the clemency shewn some of them in the year 1734. But these ministers pleaded for the repeal of the sentences against them, not as an act of clemency, but of justice; and that not so much to themselves, as to injured truth; and in order that sentences, so obstructive to the faithful discharge of the ministerial office, might not remain to future generations as standing acts of the church of Scotland. If the sentences passed against these ministers by the assembly and their commission in 1733, were unjust, it does not appear that the assembly in 1734 made any acknowledgment of that injustice, or gave these ministers any sufficient ground to believe that the sentences against them were not still considered by that assembly as legal, formal, valid, and as precedents to be imitated afterwards. Hence it is no wonder that these ministers, when they considered the principle, on which the act of the assembly for restoring them proceeded, could not acquiesce in it.

Alex. This assembly repealed the act passed in 1732, which had given occasion to the protestation and secession of these ministers. For their satisfaction and for that of all others, the same assembly made an act declaring, that due and regular ministerial freedom is still left entire to all ministers. They also gave remarkable checks to violent settlements. This was a singularly faithful and reforming assembly, who did very much in a short time. On these accounts Mr. Willison thinks, that the four brethren ought not to have persisted in their secession.*

Ruf. With regard to the act of this celebrated assembly concerning ministerial freedom, it is necessary to remember, that, when they declare "that due and regular ministerial freedom is still left entire to "all ministers," they add, "that the same was not, nor shall be held, "nor understood to be any wise impaired by the late assembly's deci-"sion in the process against Mr. Erskine;" hereby signifying that, however such freedom as that which Mr. Erskine had used in his sermon was manifestly restrained by their sentences against him, there was no impairing or restraining in these sentences of due and regular ministerial freedom. So that the freedom which Mr. Erskine had used, and for which he and his three brethren had protested, was considered as neither due nor regular. Hence it appears, that, whatever the assembly found it expedient to do for the sake of peace, they still justified the censures that had been passed on these brethren, and branded the freedom, for which they had protested, as undue and irregular. With regard to the act passed in 1732 concerning the settlement of vacant congregations, though it was repealed, it was not declared sinful, or contrary to the rights and privileges that belong to the people of God, according to his word and the subordinate standards of the church of Scotland. Nothing was stated as the reason of its re-

* Imp. Test. pages 139, 140.

peal, but that, in the passing of it, some forms, that had been appointed by the assembly to be observed in such cases, had been omitted.* Nor was the method of settling ministers according to the said act; nor the practice of candidates in accepting presentations from patrons, declared to be contrary to the word of God and sufficient ground of church censure. So that Mr. Willison had little reason to boast of the checks given by this assembly to violent settlements. How unavailing their pretended checks were, appears from a statement which I shall now read to you from Mr. Wilson's Defence, published in the year 1739; a statement which is not contradicted by Mr. Willison, nor, as far as I know, by any other. "Even the assembly in 1734, when "the case of Cambusnethan," says Mr. Wilson, "came before them "by an appeal from a sentence of the presbytery of Hamilton, evident-"ly tending to a violent settlement, remitted it to the presbytery of "Hamilton to proceed towards the settlement, as they shall judge "best for the edification of that congregation. This was a delivering "up of the oppressed into the hands of those who had given sentence "against them.† Every one of our assemblies since the year 1734, "have authorized, supported or countenanced such violent settle-"ments, either upon the footing of the repealed act passed in 1732, or "upon the footing of the patronage act: As for instance, the assembly "in 1735 referred the case of the enrolment of the intruders into the "parishes of Muckhart and Troquire unto their respective synods; "hereby plainly authorizing the synods to enrol these intruders. The "assembly in 1736 appointed the presbytery of Sterling to proceed to "a violent settlement in the parish of Denny: and the assembly in "1737 declared their dissatisfaction with the conduct of the presbyte-"ry of Stirling in neglecting to obey the appointment of the preced-"ing assembly with respect to that settlement. The assembly in 1738 "appointed a violent settlement in the parish of Dron; and sustained "a call for Dr. Wisheart to one of the churches of Edinburgh, which "proceeded purely upon the footing of the repealed act in 1732."‡ Such was the state of matters with regard to the settlement of ministers, when Mr. Wilson wrote his Defence. Many similar instances have occurred since that time. How little the sacred right of christians to choose their own pastors is respected of late by the judicatories of that church appears from the resolution of the assembly in 1784, to leave out of the instructions given their commission one usually inserted respecting an application to the legislature for the removal of the grievance of patronage; hereby intimating, that they no longer consider the law of patronage as any grievance.

In short, the assembly in 1734, seems far from deserving the characacter, which Mr. Willison gives it, of "a singularly faithful and "reforming assembly." They shewed some inclination to restore the Seceding ministers to their communion; but declined acknowledging the injustice of the sentence that had been passed against them for their faithful testimony and protestation. These ministers found the principal grounds of their secession rather aggravated than removed by the act of this assembly concerning their case; whilst it represented

* Wilson's Defence of Reformation principles, chap. ii. sect. 2nd, page 105.

† Ibid. page 106. ‡ Ibid. sect 6. page 160.

the matters in controversy between them and the judicatories as only small and trifling, intimating that they, who contended for truth and duty in such matters, were disturbers of the peace of the church and authors of animosities and divisions. This assembly appears to have been as much determined, as the preceding assemblies, to make no acknowledgment of the public evils specified in the representations that had been laid before them. One of these evils was the sin of the judicatories in licensing so many to preach the gospel, who seemed to be ashamed of Christ and him crucified. So little regard did they shew to that which Mr. Willison represents them as very careful to promote, the pure preaching of the gospel.

Alex. This assembly in 1734 appointed a committee to draw up an overture of an act to give directions as to the right preaching of the gospel, and to restrain the legal preaching and moral harangues of many not so agreeable thereto. This had been several times attempted in former years, but was still dropt till now, that the assembly formed and referred their overture to their commission to ripen it. This excellent overture, having been transmitted to presbyteries and their consent to it obtained, was enacted at last by the assembly in 1736.*

Ruf. There were indeed many excellent things in that act. But still it is to be lamented, that neither in this nor in any other of their acts is there an acknowledgment of the sin of the judicatories just now mentioned; nor a plain assertion of the truth in direct and express opposition to many pernicious errors, which had been brought to the bar of some preceding assemblies. Besides, if the assembly in 1736 had meant faithfully to assert the truth and to condemn error, how inconsistent were they in neglecting to censure professor Campbell of St. Andrews; when it was sufficiently proved before them, that he had vented in his writings, several positions, which Mr. Willison himself calls *dangerous errors!*† As to Mr. Campbell's explanations, (besides that some of them were far from deserving the epithet of sound or orthodox) the assembly's admitting them as a sufficient defence in his case, is justly disapproved by Mr. Willison himself. "For "a heretic," says he, "when in hazard of censure, may make a shift "to put an orthodox sense upon his words, if that will save him, though "it should be quite contrary to the obvious meaning of them. And "he may declare his owning the words of our confession of faith; and "yet affix a sense and meaning to them directly opposite to the known "sentiments and doctrine of this church."

§ 4. *Alex.* When honest ministers, says Mr. Willison, were travelling, sweating, labouring and struggling, even above their strength, to get things that were wrong reformed and rectified; it was extremely afflicting to them, that the four brethren, with whom they formerly had taken sweet counsel, would by no means return to their assistance. These faithful ministers had the truths contended for at heart, as well as the four brethren.‡

* Imp. Test. pages 139, 143.

† The assembly in 1736 gave no small occasion of offence by their management in the affair of professor Campbell at St. Andrews, who had vented several dangerous errors in his writings. Imp. Test. page 152.

‡ Imp. Test. pages 136, 141.

Ruf. These four brethren continued in conjunction with the judicatories, as long as they were allowed to bear a faithful testimony doctrinally or by protests; but when they became liable to censure for doing so; and when they found that their connexion with these judicatories rendered the discharge of several important duties of their office quite impracticable; such as that of exhibiting a necessary judicial testimony against prevailing errors and corruptions, and that of licensing and ordaining to the ministry, such persons as they could judge to have the Lord's call to that office; it then became a sinful connexion, in which they could by no means continue any longer with a good conscience. The question which they had to determine was not, whether they should continue in conjunction with those who, as well as themselves, had the truths contended for at heart; (for these could not be said to represent the body of the established church, as the judicatories did;) but whether they should continue in conjunction with such as were going on in a course of defection from these truths, and were now become the ruling party in the judicatories. These ministers had no other alternative than this: either to continue in such a connexion with that party as they knew to be sinful, or to make a secession. With regard to Mr. Willison and others, who were esteemed the more faithful part of the ministers in the communion of the established church, they were to make their choice; whether they would continue with the ruling party or join with the Seceding ministers. In the issue, the most of those, who bore that character, judged that their continuance in connexion with the ruling party would be more useful. The experience of above eighty years has shewn the greatness of their mistake. Their continuance in that communion has not reformed the ruling party; among whom latitudinarian church communion and other deviations from the doctrine and order of the reformed church of Scotland, as represented in her confessions, covenants and other constitutions, have increased since the time of the secession. Nor has it tended to preserve her unity; for it is well known, that the people there, having learned from the judicatories to disregard the standards of the reformation, are divided into a multitude of sects, propagating error and disorder, which ought to have no place in the church of God.

Alex. Mr. Willison tells us, that a body of faithful ministers, after they had continued for two or three years to struggle, even above their strength, and thereby had got many good things done, still hoping that their brethren would return to their assistance, were grievously discouraged, when they saw them still bent upon their begun schism; and were, at last, so disheartened by their measures, that many of them gave over travelling and attending the assemblies.*

Ruf. As to the good things done by the assembly in 1734, we have already considered the most material of them; and have seen how defective they were, and how insufficient to indicate any sincere design of a thorough reformation. That assembly shewed no disposition to acknowledge the evils, of which the four brethren complained, as contrary to the word of God, and to their own subordinate standards. Nay, in the course of three or four years afterward, new public evils were added; such as the assembly's passing over, without censure,

* Imp. Test. page 165.

professor Campbell's dangerous errors, that were brought to their bar; and the compliance of the most part of the ministers of the established church with the appointment of the civil government to read an act of parliament, concerning captain John Porteus, on the first Lord's day of every month, for the space of a year. Mr. Willison acknowledges that the more faithful part of the ministers in the communion of the established church were disheartened; and that many of them thought it was in vain to attend the assemblies. It seems, they had no hope of getting any more good things done. He lays the blame of this upon the four brethren's continuing in a state of secession. But he ought rather to have laid it upon the obstinacy of the judicatories in a course of defection from the principles of the reformation: while it cannot well be denied, that the church communion of those who were esteemed more faithful with the ruling party, contributed not a little to encourage that obstinacy.

§ 5. *Alex.* Mr. Willison complains of the irreverent and disrespectful carriage of these brethren towards their mother church, particularly in their declinature; wherein they disown all her authority and jurisdiction over them, and pronounce, judicially, a sentence of their new erected presbytery against the general assembly, and all the other judicatories of the church; finding and declaring, that they are not lawful courts of Christ. They ought to have remembered, that the laws of God and man do highly resent children's beating, cursing or maltreating their mother, even when she is somewhat severe and out of her duty to them. Zeal ought to be attended with meekness, courteousness, and humbleness of mind.

Ruf. Perhaps the phrase *mother church* ought rather to be applied to the catholic, which is called Jerusalem, the mother of us all, Gal. iv. 26, than to any particular ecclesiastical body. But, passing this, it is granted, that a reverent submission is due to the office-bearers and courts of the particular church to which we belong. This submission, however, is not unlimited; it is only in the Lord. Our forefathers, about three hundred years ago, owned the church of Rome to be the mother church: yet, instead of blaming, we approve and commend their casting off her authority. Persons in the communion of the church of England, when they come to be more enlightened in the knowledge of the instituted worship and government of the church of God,—justly disown the authority of that particular church, and reckon themselves fully warranted to disregard the sentence she may denounce against them for disapproving their imposition of humanly devised ceremonies and forms of prayer in Divine worship, and the pretended jurisdiction of her diocesan bishops over the other ministers of the word: and, were these dissenters summoned before the spiritual courts of that church, they might justly declare, that they did not own them as lawful and rightly constituted courts of Christ. Such was the declaration which eight Seceding ministers, having constituted themselves, (as the ministers of Christ have a right to do,) into a presbytery, made in their declinature, with regard to the judicatories of the church of Scotland. The same grounds which warranted a secession from these judicatories, were sufficient to warrant the disowning of their authority.

Alex. I suppose Mr. Willison was far from admitting that the grounds of their declinature were sufficient.

Ruf. It is a pity, that instead of amusing his readers with general reflections, he had not done, or attempted to do, what that assembly declined, that is, that he had not enquired into the grounds of this declinature. If he had done so, he would have found, that the facts which these ministers considered as sufficient grounds for their declinature, are mostly acknowledged as evils and grievances, in his own testimony: such as, that these judicatories not only received intruders into their number, but refused to censure them; that they had been chargeable with promoting corruption, by tolerating the erroneous, and by passing acts that tended to suppress ministerial freedom in testifying against public evils; that, instead of acknowledging the sinfulness of these steps, they continued to justify them; that as the British parliament had encroached upon the kingdom of Christ by enjoining ministers, under the penalty of being deprived of their seat in church courts, to read from the pulpit on the Sabbath the state-paper before-mentioned concerning captain Porteus; so the ministers consented to that encroachment, the most part of them having read it in one shape or another; and the judicatories allowing their compliance to pass without any censure. The facts represented by the associate presbytery were too notorious to be denied; and so diametrically opposite to the acts and constitutions of the church of Scotland in her reforming times, that no candid mind would attempt to reconcile the former to the latter.

§ 6. *Alex.* Such a declinature, says Mr. Willison, and such a sentence as theirs would seem to import no less than the unchurching the whole church, and unministering the whole ministry, faithful body and all; as if they were all given up to some dreadful apostacy or fundamental errors. Few judicious divines will adventure to unchurch the church of Scotland. They have owned others as corrupt as she, if not more, as churches of Christ. The glorious Head owned some no less corrupt as golden candlesticks; such as the seven churches of Asia, the churches of Corinth, Galatia, and others.*

Ruf. Is there not a great want of candour in the construction which Mr. Willison here puts upon the secession and declinature of these ministers, as unchurching the church of Scotland, and unministering all her ministers? They still allowed the church of Scotland, notwithstanding all her defections, to be, in a large sense, a true church of Christ; as having these things which are essential to the being of his church, and holding, by visible profession, the essentials of christianity. In the same sense, they allow the church of England, and other degenerate and corrupt churches, to be churches of Christ. Our divines, such as Durham and Gillespie, in disputing against the Independents, do indeed condemn separation from true churches. But then the churches they mean, are such as profess and maintain the true doctrine and the true faith; and churches, in which discipline is uprightly exercised as God's word prescribes, and the sacraments are rightly administered by such ministers as are lawfully called by the Head of the church. It is certain, that the Seceding ministers declared that the church of Scotland as holding, in due subordination to

* Imp. Test. page 164.

the holy scriptures, the Westminster confession of faith, the form of presbyterial church government, and the obligation of the covenants national and solemn league, and having in her communion a great number of the faithful, who regard these standards as bonds of union, was to be distinguished from the same church as represented by her judicatories persisting obstinately in a course of defection from the principles exhibited in these standards; and making the establishment by civil law the principal bond of union. It was in the latter point of view, and not in the former, that these brethren seceded from the church of Scotland; and that they disowned these judicatories, as not lawful, nor rightly constituted courts of Christ. Mr. Willison repeats the common-place objection, so much employed by the Popish and Episcopal churches against those who withdraw from them: namely, That though the churches of Corinth, Galatia, Pergamus and Thyatira were chargeable with great errors and corruptions, yet the faithful were not called to separate from their communion. But the case of these churches is not parallel to that of the ruling party in the church of Scotland; unless it can be shewn, that the judicatories representing any of these churches defended the evils for which they were reproved; and also, that they persisted obstinately in doing so after the reproofs and warnings given them by the apostles. This has never been shewn to have been the case. If, however, it could be shewn, it would prove more than I believe Mr. Willison himself would grant: namely, That we may continue in communion with a church, which, in her judicial capacity, obstinately persists in denying the resurrection of the body, in maintaining justification by works, or in tolerating the lewd opinions and practices of the Nicolaitans. Again, supposing, that, in any one of these churches, the ruling party, after having received repeated reproofs for the evils into which they had fallen, had obstinately persisted in them; and supposing it had been impracticable for the minor part of the ministers, while they continued in conjunction with the ruling party, and subordinate to them, to maintain a faithful testimony against such evils, and to comply with the admonition that Christ had given them, particularly in censuring the erroneous, and in not suffering them to teach and seduce the Lord's people:—Would it not, in that case, have been the duty of the minor part to make secession, that they might not be chargeable with disobedience to the Lord Jesus, nor partake of the sins of the ruling party? It is evidently agreeable to the whole tenor of scripture to hold, that this would have been their duty. The Seceding ministers often observe, upon this subject, that in judging whether secession from a particular church be warrantable, it is of great importance to observe what is the prevailing tendency of the proceedings of her judicatories; whether it be towards reformation or towards greater corruption? Mistakes in the administration of a church, while these are not obstinately persisted in, and while, in her profession and in the general tenor of her proceedings, she is endeavouring to hold fast what she has attained, and to make progress in reformation, can be no warrantable ground for secession.

Thus, the church of Corinth was a reforming church. The apostle Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, reproves the neglect of church censure in the case of an incestuous person; and charges some

among them with denying the resurrection of the dead. But it is evident, from the second epistle, that the office-bearers there, had repented of their negligence and censured the incestuous person: and as, in that second epistle, there is no hint of any remaining among them, who denied the resurrection; and their godly sorrow on account of the evils which had prevailed, is described in the liveliest colours: it appears, that the office-bearers had discharged their duty in reclaiming those who had held that heresy, or in giving a suitable testimony against such as were obstinate. In a word, there is no intimation in the second epistle, that they slighted the warning which was given them in the first.

§ 7. *Alex.* The doctrine, worship and government of the established church of Scotland, appear to be so agreeable to the scriptures, that she may be accounted a true church, from which it is unlawful to separate.

Ruf. I have already observed, that the Seceding ministers distinguished between the church of Scotland, as represented in her standards, which had been adopted in her reforming times,—and the same church, as represented by her judicatories, that are now persisting obstinately in a course of defection from those standards.* These ministers always averred, that it was not in the former sense, but only in the latter, that they seceded from the church of Scotland. They shewed that this church, as represented by the ruling party in her judicatories, is chargeable with such a course of defection from the purity she had attained, in doctrine, order and government, as is evidently contrary to those notes or characters of a true church of God, which, in a former conversation, we found to be stated in the confessions of the reformed churches. For, said they, in the first place, she refuses to make a faithful profession of the truths of God: for when the teachers of gross and pernicious errors are brought to her bar, she will neither inflict due censure on these teachers, nor assert the truth in express opposition to their errors. In the next place, she is far from the upright administration of discipline; whilst her judicatories continue in the tyrannical practice of settling ministers over congregations without the consent of the christian people who compose them; whilst they censure ministers for bearing a faithful testimony against such acts of the assembly and proceedings of judicatories, as are contrary to the word of God and the subordinate standards of this church; and whilst they treat representations and petitions for the redress of grievances with contempt. In the third place, the sacraments are not administered with that purity and rectitude, which the Divine institution requires; while they are dispensed by such as, having run unsent, and having been intruded upon christian congregations, ought not to be acknowledged by the church of Christ, as her lawful ministers. For, as the first confession of the church of Scotland observes, it is requisite to the right administration of the sacraments, not only that the matter of them be agreeable to the word of God, but also, that they be dispensed by lawful ministers, appointed to the preaching of the word, and lawfully called thereto by some church.

* Wilson's Defence, page 6. And Continuation, page 373.

§ 8. *Alex.* Why, says Mr. Willison, must it now become such a deadly sin, for worthy men to go with Joseph and Nicodemus, to backsliding judicatories, to plead with their mother, and to testify against her corruptions.*

Ruf. The judicatories, in which Joseph and Nicodemus sat, openly denied the Supreme Deity of the Son of God, and avowed their designs against his life, John vii. 32, 45. They enacted a most sinful term of communion, that, if any man should confess Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue, John ix. 22. According to this argument, a person ought to continue in church communion with a society of Arians or Socinians; even though they should make the denial of the Supreme Deity of Jesus Christ a term of their communion. This is surely more than Mr. Willison meant to prove. An argument that proves too much, proves nothing.

Alex. Did not our Lord Jesus and his disciples continue in the communion of the Jewish church, which was then exceedingly corrupt?

Ruf. This argument also, if it proved any thing, would prove too much: it tends to prove that there can be no secession from a particular church, however corrupt, which would not be a secession from the catholic church, or which would not be unlawful. For, under the Old Testament dispensation, the people of God made a profession of his name as the God of Israel, and a confession of their faith in his promise, by adhering to the temple and its ordinances. The positive institutions, which were peculiar to the temple, belonged to the ceremonial law; which was the external bond by which the whole visible church was then united. Hence, there could then be no separation from the temple and its ordinances, without separation from the whole visible church of God. But the case of the church under the New Testament is very different. For the profession of the true religion, which is now the only external uniting bond of the catholic church, has no more relation to one place or nation of the world than another.† Hence, it cannot now be necessarily inferred from the withdrawing of persons from the communion of a particular church, that they also withdraw from the catholic church. On the contrary, the withdrawing of a faithful number from the sacramental communion of a particular church, on account of its corruptions, may be a blessed means of preserving purity in the profession of the true religion; and, consequently, of strengthening the bond of union in the catholic church. The constant attendance of the prophets, and of Christ himself on the temple and its ordinances, while they opposed the corruptions of the Jewish church, was then no more than a steadfast adherence to the profession of the true religion, as the bond of union in the catholic church; an example which the Seceding ministers judged they could not have followed, if they had continued in ministerial and sacramental communion with the ruling party in the established church of Scotland, who persisted obstinately in causing divisions and offences, contrary to the faithful profession of the christian religion.

* Imp. Test. page 166. † Malachi, i. 11.

§ 9. *Alex.* These brethren might have continued in communion with the established church, while no sinful terms of communion were imposed on them.

Ruf. According to what was observed in our former conversations, it cannot be safely granted, that we may warrantably hold sacramental communion with any particular church, while we cannot approve of her public profession, whatever she may, or may not require of us otherwise. The view we have taken of sacramental or church communion which is agreeable to the word of God, leads us to conclude, that we ought not to have that communion with a particular church, which has any thing in the matter of her public profession, or in her avowed and habitual manner of maintaining it, contrary to that word; or whose profession and public administrations are not such as accord with the character of the church of God, as the pillar and ground of truth. In the first part of the last century, a considerable body of Dissenters in Ireland, refused to admit confessions of faith enacted by the authority of the church to be tests of orthodoxy or soundness in the faith; and insisted, that no other test should be required as a term of communion, than an acknowledgment of the truth in the express words of scripture. On this account, a great number of these brethren declared a secession from them: and they had good reason to do so; since Arians, Socinians, Arminians and other heretics will not scruple to make such an acknowledgment; while the sense they put upon the words of scripture is quite opposite to the scope and design of the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures.* Here is an example of a just and necessary secession; where there was no formal or positive imposition of any unlawful term of communion. The ground of it was only a want of that exhibition of Divine truth which characterises the church of the living God. But the case was otherwise with the Seceding ministers: they found, that unwarrantable terms of communion were imposed by some acts of the assembly. Thus, according to the decisions of the assembly, in the case of Ebenezer Erskine and his three brethren, no minister was allowed to testify from the pulpit against acts of assembly and proceedings of church judicatories, however contrary to the constitutional principles of the church of Scotland: nor was any minister allowed to protest for his own exoneration, against sentences or decisions of the assembly, though nearly affecting the public cause of God, and restraining ministerial freedom and faithfulness in testifying against public defections. And if a minister should refuse to submit to be rebuked by the judicatories for his faithfulness in the instances now mentioned, he had nothing to expect but suspension, and the dissolution of the pastoral relation between him and his congregation. Again, there was an act of the assembly in 1733, discharging the ministers of Dumfermline presbytery, under pain of the highest censure, to admit any of the parish of Kinross to sealing ordinances, without the permission of the incumbent there, who was an intruder. By this act, ministers are bound up from dispensing sealing ordinances to such of the Lord's people as could not conscientiously submit to the ministry of intruders. By an act of assembly in the year 1720, ministers are prohibited "to recommend by preaching, writing, or by printing the book, entitled, the Marrow of Modern

* See Wilson's Defence of the Reformation Principles, &c. page 49.

"Divinity, or in discourse to say any thing in its favour; but, on the "contrary, are enjoined and required to warn and exhort their people, "into whose hands that book may come, not to read or use the same." Now a sinful term of communion is imposed, when a person is required in a particular case, to cease from doing good. But the Seceding ministers, though they did not look upon the Marrow as, like the scriptures, absolutely faultless; nor did they put it on a level with the subordinate standards of the church of Scotland; yet, they judged that they were doing good, when they recommended that treatise as, in the general tenor and manifest design of it, a good and useful book: a book, remarkable for setting the difference between the law and the gospel, between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, in a clear light; and for directing to the true way of attaining gospel holiness. On these accounts, it has recommended itself to the consciences of many judicious ministers and private christians. Indeed several precious truths of the gospel received a deep wound by the assembly's act condemning that book.

§ 10. *Alex.* The secession of these ministers was a lamentable schism.

Ruf. The word *schism* is used several times in the first epistle to the Corinthians, Chap. i. 10, *I beseech you brethren, that there be no divisions among you;* and chap. xi. 18, *I hear, that there are divisions among you:* The original word rendered *divisions* is, in both these passages, *schisms.* These were differences and janglings, that took place amongst the members of that church, who still remained joined together in external church communion. The schism meant in these texts was a partial and contentious preferring of one to another of their ministers and teachers, who were holding the same testimony of Jesus; as when one said, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos, 1 Corinth. iii. 4. Such was the schism testified against by an act of the assembly in 1647, enjoining every member in each congregation to attend the ministry of his own pastor; at the same time charging every minister to be diligent in fulfilling his ministry. Such is the sense in which the scripture uses the word schism. Hence it seems improper to apply this term to any regular secession from particular churches, which their corruptions have rendered necessary. But even in the sense of causeless separation it is evident from the review we have taken of the case of the Seceding ministers, that we cannot, with any colour of reason, accuse them of schism; for when their secession took place, the evils of the judicatories were many, great, obstinately persisted in, and still increasing; all other means of reclaiming them having proved ineffectual. Nay, considering the evils which occasioned the secession, we will be under a necessity, of acknowledging these judicatories, that ejected the four brethren, to be the separatists. For, as the pious Mr. Rutherford justly observes, "When the greatest "part of a church makes defection from the truth, the lesser part re-"maining sound, the greatest part is the church of separatists."* They who persist obstinately in a course of defection, are the party who break the peace of the church; who act contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and do a great deal of hurt to religion and serious godli-

* Due Right of Presbytery, page 255.

ness; not the smaller part, who make secession, that they may bear testimony to the truth, and hold fast that which they have received, according to the charge which our Lord gives the churches.*

Alex. Separation is contrary to the many injunctions in scripture of unity and brotherly love,—contrary to the end of Christ's death, and of his intercession;—it is a rending of his seamless coat.

Ruf. Such declamation on the general topics of love and unity is often used against the Seceding ministers without ever touching the question as to the lawfulness of their secession. We have equal reason to expatiate on the evil of such an union with corrupt judicatories as would preclude ministers from the faithful exercise of their office, particularly, in bearing a judicial as well as a doctrinal testimony against error and corruption. It is the common duty of christians to bear testimony by their profession and private conversation against errors which are publicly propagated; but a public and judicial testimony belongs to the office of ministers. When the keys with which Christ has entrusted the ministers of the gospel are abused by a corrupt majority in any particular church to the subversion of the truth; ought not those who continue faithful, though few, to make use of these keys in supporting it? are we not bound to follow the example of Christ in bearing testimony to the truth? *For this end*, said our Lord Jesus, *was I born, and for this end came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth.* The union which is the end of Christ's death and intercession, is the union of his people in their endeavour to keep Christ's word; and in the study of holiness; without which, they cannot have communion with the Father and with the Son.† The unity for which Christ intercedes, is the unity of the Spirit;—not of the Spirit of error or of carnal policy, which from worldly and selfish motives, declines any public appearance against the evils of the times in which we live;—but of the Spirit of truth, guiding us into all the truths of Christ;—of the Spirit of counsel and of might, inspiring us with a holy resolution to keep the word of Christ's patience, however many forsake it;—of a Spirit that bears witness of Christ, causing us also to bear witness;—of a Spirit of glory and of God, resting upon those who are reproached for the name of Christ.

§ 11. *Alex.* The Seceders seem to hold principles of separation similar to those of the ancient Novatians and Donatists, and of the English Brownists.

Ruf. This comparison is manifestly unjust. We had occasion formerly to consider the principles of the Novatians and Donatists, and also those of the Brownists with regard to church communion. They were quite contrary to the principles of the Seceding ministers. The ground upon which these ministers seceded from the established church as represented by her judicatories was a course of defection obstinately persisted in from various parts of reformation which she had formerly attained. They never pleaded for positive signs of regeneration as a qualification necessary to the admission of persons as church members. They never allowed, with the Brownists, that the sacraments are polluted to the sincere partakers of them by the sins of fellow-worshippers. Though there are some protestant churches, that have so many things, in their profession and habitual administration,

* Revel. ii. 25. iii. 11. † John xvii. 6, 17, 21.

contrary to the scriptural characters of a true church of Christ, that they judge it their duty to bear testimony against them, while they obstinately persist in these things, in the way of declining actual communion with them; yet they are far, very far from unchurching them, or denying them to be true churches of Christ, or from putting them upon a level with the Popish church.*

§ 12. *Alex.* The secession of these ministers is unprecedented in the history of the church of Scotland. Great defections prevailed there between the years 1596 and 1638. In that period, the honest party witnessed against these defections without erecting themselves into different judicatories, or any thing like separation. They did so in a way of church communion.†

Ruf. It is necessary to observe the difference between the course of defection between 1596 and 1638 and the course of defection which occasioned the secession of these ministers. The former was the work of king James and his court, in order to introduce prelacy. He first attempted to persuade some of the ministers to sit and vote in parliament. In the next place, he laboured to set up constant moderators in presbyteries and synods. And, at last, he tried to introduce the use of certain Popish ceremonies and of a liturgy into the public worship. But he could never get what could be called a free and lawful assembly to authorize any of these things. Hence the constant cry of ministers and presbyteries in that period was for such an assembly consisting of members chosen according to the form and order of the church of Scotland. Thus the course of defection between 1596 and 1638 was carried on violently by the civil power. But that which occasioned the secession of these ministers was carried on by assemblies chosen by presbyteries after the usual manner. Thus, there was not the same cause for secession from the church of Scotland as represented in her judicatories in the former of these periods, as in the latter. But it is

* There may be churches, says the celebrated Vitringa, called christian, in which, though we do not externally communicate with them at the Lord's table, we acknowledge there are true christians, belonging to the mystical body of Christ; in the congregation, for example, of the Greek church, of the Mennonites, of the Remonstrants, of the brethren of the Augsburgh Confession. The external communion of christians, for various reasons, which were deemed convincing by the ancient church, is confined within narrower bounds than the internal. So that if we separate from some congregations of christians, the separation is only hypothetical and on account of those errors which we disapprove and renounce; leaving them, in other respects, to the judgement of Christ. Many prefer a discipline which is thus more restricted, to that which is more relaxed; lest the public communion of christians with those whom they know to be holding grievous error, even though it be not fundamental, should be considered as a communion with them in that error, or at least should be an occasion of corrupting the doctrine of the true faith. Possunt dari ecclesiæ christiani nominis cum quibus externe non colimus communionem mensæ sacræ, in quibus nihilominus agnoscamus veros dari christianos, qui partem faciant mystici corporis Christi; quales omnino dari credimus in cœtibus ecclesiæ Græcæ, Mennonitarum, Remonstrantium et Augustanæ Confessionis, quos solos exempli causa nunc allego. *Externa* enim christianorum communio ob varias rationes, quas prudentia veteribus christianis suasit, ad arctiores limites restringitur quam *interna:* ut adeo si nos a quibusdam, aliis cœtibus *externe* separemus, id solummodo hypothetice et restricte fiat cum respectu ad illos in doctrina aut cultu errores quos fugimus et aversamur: cætera relinquimus judicio Christi. Plerique existimant, prudentiæ est esse subterfugere periculum nimiæ libertatis et indulgentiæ ac præstare, ut arctetur quam laxetur disciplina, ne christiani cum iis publicam exercendo communionem, quos in gravi (licet forte non fundamentali) errore versari putant, hoc ipso venire censeantur in erroris illius communionem, vel saltem occasionem præbeant corrumpendæ veræ fidei doctrinæ. Observat. Sacræ, Lib. v. cap. ix. § 13.

† Imp. Test. page 163.

farther to be observed, that it is not true, that the contending of the honest party in the period between 1596 and 1638, was always in a way of church communion with the corrupt party.

For, in the first place, many ministers refused to acknowledge the authority of the pretended assemblies that were then held by the authority of the court; such as that which met at Perth in the year 1618, and passed what are called *the five articles of Perth*. Mr. Calderwood says, the greatest part of the best qualified ministers through the land, and of the most zealous professors, refused the authority of the Perth assembly. Several presbyteries, ministers and professors who disowned the authority of these pretended assemblies; must then have been rather considered as seceding from them, than as holding church communion with them.

In the second place, the presbyteries continued in this period to meet regularly, for the exercise of church discipline, without any subordination to the bishops, and consequently not in church communion with them. Mr. Wodrow in his history* says, Our first prelates were not against the meetings of presbytery in their several jurisdictions, but they continued to meet regularly, and had almost the whole of church discipline in their hands. Mr. Wodrow adds, from the remarks of the reverend Mr. Robert Douglas, that he, Mr. Douglas, dealt with the statesmen in the year 1662 not to prohibit presbyteries, but to allow them to stand as under the former bishops: for added he, if they are pulled down, and set up in subordination to the bishops, no honest minister will keep them. From this account of Mr. Douglas it appears, that before the year 1638 presbyteries were not pulled down, and that they did not at that time subsist in subordination to the bishops.

In the third place, the practice and sentiments of some eminent ministers of that period were in favour of a secession from the corrupt judicatories supported by the court. Mr. Calderwood in his history,† relates, that, "at a conference he had with some of the bishops, they "urged him to repair to the synods; particularly the bishop of Caith-"ness said to him, come and say, *Hic sum*, [that is, I am here] and "then do as you please. But, Mr. Calderwood replied, that *hic sum* "is the question;" adding some weighty reasons why he could not be present at their synods. Mr. John Welch in a letter directed to Mr. Bruce, after charging the bishops with perfidy and apostacy, concludes, "Therefore, they are not to be heard any more, in public, in consisto-"ries, in colleges, or in synods; for what fellowship hath light with "darkness." Mr. James Melvil, in a letter to one of his brethren in prison, has the follwing words: "Alas! if that spirit of zeal and "courage, which sometimes reigned in our kirk, were kindled up "again, it might make a few from every presbytery and province, "convene together in the name of Christ, and censure these corrup-"tions of the kirk to the uttermost." Mr. Robert Bruce was ejected from his charge in the year 1600, and banished his native country; because he had not such satisfaction about the truth of Gowry's conspiracy, that he could conscientiously give thanks to the Lord for the king's deliverance from it. After this time he never sat in any of the judicatories. Though he was allowed to return from banishment, yet

* Vol. 6, pages 117, 118. † Page 687.

he was confined, first to his own house at Kinnaird, and afterwards at Inverness and other places. But wherever he was, he still continued to exercise his ministry with great success, without any conjunction with the judicatories.

Alex. Mr. Willison, in his testimony, laments the division which was occasioned by some insnaring questions proposed by Charles and the parliament in 1650 concerning the admission of persons who had been opposers of the covenanted reformation, to places of trust civil and military, upon a public profession of their repentance. Those who were for the admission of such to places of power and trust were called public resolutioners; and those against it, protesters. Eminently great and good men were upon both sides; and some no less eminent joined neither side. Perhaps the protesters, who were the minor party, carried their opposition too far on so narrow a point; but they did not state a secession upon it. Mr. Currie, a minister of the established church asserted, that Mr. Guthrie and the other protesters in his day were as opposite in principle and practice to the associate presbytery, as are nadir and zenith, or light and darkness.

Ruf. This remark is sufficiently confuted by Mr. Wilson of Perth in a passage which I shall read to you from the Continuation of his excellent Defence of Reformation Principles;* a writer whose information on this subject cannot be disputed.

"The principles of the associate presbytery," says he, "which are "fully and plainly laid down in the assertory part of *the Act and Tes-* "*timony*; are the same with those which were professed and main- "tained by James Guthrie and the other protesters in his day. As to "the manner of testifying for these principles, the associate presbyte- "ry do testify in the same way and manner that the eminent minister "Mr. James Guthrie and the other protesters in his day did testify; "as may appear from the following particular instances."

"1*mo*, The protesters in the former period disowned the authority "and constitution of the assemblies that met in the years 1651 and "1652: Even so the associate presbytery have, upon just and weighty "grounds, disowned the authority and constitution of the present judi- "catories, by their act dated at Edinburgh, May 1739."

"2*do*, Mr. Guthrie and the other protesters in his day, continued to "exercise their ministry, after some of them were deposed by the pre- "tended judicatories at that time. And I suppose it will not be con- "troverted by any that know the history of our church, that these de- "posed ministers continued to exercise their ministry in as free and "full a manner as formerly. Even so the ministers of the associate "presbytery, the most part of them, have been prosecuted unto deposi- "tion by the pretended assemblies at this day; but do continue to ex- "ercise their ministry notwithstanding the pretended sentence passed "against them."

"3*tio*, Mr. Guthrie and the protesters in his day, met together in "distinct judicatories, and exercised the keys of government and "discipline in a distinct judicative capacity from those who were "called the public resolutioners. Even so the Seceding ministers ex- "ercise the key of government and discipline in a distinct capacity "from the present judicatories. There was a presbytery of Linlith-

* Pages 501—504.

"gow, composed of public resolutioners; and another, bearing the "same name, composed of protesters. In the bounds of Stirling "presbytery, the protesters and the public resolutioners met in dis-"tinct presbyteries; the former at Stirling, and the other at Alloa. "The public resolutioners, in their paper, entitled, *The Protestation*, "given in to the general assembly, July 21st, 1652, say, *The protest-"ers meeting then in Edinburgh without order, after a little pause, "did constitute themselves in an ecclesiastical judicatory, wherein "magisterially they define things so prejudicial to us, as not only per-"fectly obstructed all peace, but also sounded the alarm to a new con-"flict, by emitting a paper, wherein they peremptorily conclude, among "the chief causes of the Lord's controversy with the land, the public "resolutions and the preceding assembly to have a special place.*"

"The paper now mentioned, is written on the resolution side; and "therefore, the above expressions are in a style reflecting upon the "protesters. But we may gather from them the following plain facts. "1*mo*, That the protesters did meet at Edinburgh, and did constitute "themselves into an ecclesiastical judicatory, distinct from those of "the public resolutioners. 2*do*, That the protesters did exercise the "the keys of government and discipline in a distinct judicative capa-"city. This they did three ways: 1st, They condemned the pre-"ceding assembly. 2ndly, They condemned the public resolutions: "which two, they judicially condemn, as having a special place in the "chief causes of God's controversy with the land. 3dly, They emit "a paper containing their above conclusions: and this is the same "upon the matter with the proceedings of the associate presbytery in "emitting their *Act and Testimony*."

From the instances now given, it appears, that the practice of the Seceding ministers, in constituting themselves into an ecclesiastical judicatory, distinct from the judicatories of the established church, was not unprecedented even in the history of the church of Scotland.

§ 13. *Alex.* These ministers have set an example of separation which has been too much followed. The divisive spirit that now prevails, tramples upon all order, and tends to produce universal confusion.

Ruf. Who are the greatest promoters of this disorder? Those who zealously contend that the Lord Jesus, the only Head of the church, has appointed such a particular form of presbyterial church government as is calculated in the best manner for the preservation of both truth and peace? or those who hold that there is no particular form of church government of Christ's institution? The Seceding ministers are most decisively of the former persuasion; while it is too evident, that the latter opinion prevails among their opposers. The truth is, there is no other basis upon which order and peace will ever be restored to the church of Christ, than that of submission to his authority, determining the form of church government in opposition to prelacy on the one hand, and to independency on the other.

With regard to the example of the secession made by these ministers, I am persuaded that there would be fewer separations, (and no unnecessary ones,) from particular churches, if none would withdraw from them but upon parallel ground, and in the same manner, in which these ministers withdrew from the church of Scotland, as she

is represented in her judicatories. The ground upon which they proceeded in their secession was no private or personal cause of their own, but the public cause of the Redeemer's Spiritual Kingdom; it was no new paradox or doubtful opinion, but principles certainly contained in the word of God, and plainly declared in the subordinate standards of that very church from which they seceded. Nor did they take this step, till they were precluded from every other way in which they could maintain a faithful testimony against the deviations which had been, and were continuing to be made from those principles. In short, the design of their secession was no other than that of maintaining the measure of reformation, or of conformity to the word of God in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, which the church of Scotland had once attained.

Alex. The shadows of the evening admonish us to put a stop to our conversation at present. I hope we shall have another opportunity afterwards of pursuing our enquiry into the principles of the Seceders.

Ruf. Before we part, allow me to add two remarks:

The first is, that, as these four ministers did not make secession from the established church as represented in her judicatories, till they found that they could not avoid it without retracting a necessary protestation which they had made for the liberty of testifying against the corruptions of these judicatories; so their act of constituting themselves into a presbytery, towards the end of the year 1733, was no rash or inconsiderate step. "Near two days," says Mr. Wilson, who was one of them, "were spent in prayer and serious reasoning on this head, "in which they endeavoured to compare the word and providences to-"gether. In their meetings on these days," adds he, "and particu-"larly in the act of prayer by which the presbytery was constituted, "they experienced something of the Lord's gracious presence and "special countenance."

The other remark is, That the ministers who composed the associate presbytery withdrew gradually from the communion of the established church, as they attained more enlarged views of the cause in which they were engaged. The rise of the secession, says a judicious writer, who was well acquainted with these ministers and their proceedings,* was the dawning of a new day, a day which, at first, was known only to the Lord. The four brethren were far from acting upon any preconceived plan. The Lord led them by a way they knew not, from one step to another. In the beginning of their dispute with the judicatories of the established church, they had no apprehension of a separation. As Luther had, at first, but a very imperfect knowledge of the Popish abominations and of the reformation which was necessary. So these ministers, for several years, found themselves but gradually emerging out of the darkness of a long and deep apostacy from the covenanted reformation. Though the occasion of the secession was the testifying of these ministers against some particular evils which had recently taken place; yet even the first statement of it in 1733 was upon the general ground of a course of defection, persisted in by the judicatories from the principles of that reformation.

The associate presbytery advanced a step farther in stating the grounds of the secession, when they published what has been called

* Display of the Secession Testimony, vol. 2, pages 382, 383.

their Extrajudicial Testimony in May 1734; the design of which was to explain the reasons of the protestation, which they had entered, the preceding year, before the commission of the general assembly. For, in that work, some particular evils, not mentioned in their former representations before the judicatories are brought forward among the reasons of the secession; and the introduction opened the way for a farther enlargement of their testimony by some historical observations on the state of the church of Scotland, both in her reforming and in her declining periods.

But the associate presbytery made the chief advance in exhibiting the grounds of their secession, by enacting and publishing the Judicial Testimony. When they entered on the formation of this deed, they determined to trace the defections of the church of Scotland, as far back as the year 1650; being convinced of the connexion between a sincere and particular mourning for the sins of the present time, and the particular acknowledgment of the defections of former periods; and that present evils are the native consequences of former iniquities.

The design of the Judicial Testimony was much promoted by a new Formula or set of questions, which the associate presbytery appointed to be put to ministers at their ordination, in place of the Formula used by the established church, which had been agreed on by the assembly in 1711. For besides some material additions in the new Formula with regard to the secession cause, the old Formula omitted several things that are specified in the new one. Particularly, the old Formula took no notice of the confession of faith as received by the assembly in 1647, but only as ratified by law in 1690: it took no notice of the larger and shorter catechisms; nor of the propositions concerning church government, which were received by the assembly in 1645; nor of the covenants national and solemn league; nor of the covenanting period at all. It took no notice of our presbyterial worship, government and discipline as sworn to in the covenants now mentioned; but only as "presently authorized and practised, and now so "happily established."

In fine, when the associate presbytery made their declinature, in the year 1739, they declared themselves more fully and plainly with respect to the judicatories of the established church, than they had hitherto done. They directly avowed themselves to be in a state of secession from the whole organized body of the present national church. Accordingly, about this time, they ceased to have ministerial communion with any ministers of the established church; and would no longer admit any who remained in the communion of that church to hold communion with them in sealing ordinances. Hence the members of the associate presbytery now judged it incumbent on them, in their public ministrations, to call their hearers to come out of that corrupt communion, shewing them the sinfulness and danger of continuing in it. Ebenezer Erskine, for example, in a sermon on Psalm, ii. 6, has these words: "When manifest treasons are committed "against the King of Zion; when corruptions either in principle or "practice, are allowed and not purged out by discipline; when the "majority of a church and of her judicatories are in a conspiracy; the "plain command in that case is, to come out from among them and to "be separate, not to touch the unclean thing, that the Lord may receive

"us. When the corrupt party are few, they are to be cast out; but "when the body or majority of the church becomes wicked, then the "sound part is to withdraw from her."

DIALOGUE II.

The secession of these ministers justifiable on other grounds than their violent extrusion.....The import of Scotland's covenanted reformation.....Of the public resolutions in 1650.....The sin of ministers in accepting of the indulgences in the reign of Charles the second.....The sinfulness of the addresses of thanks that were presented to James the second for his toleration.....Omissions of the church of Scotland at the revolution in 1688.....Evils in the manner in which religion was then settled by the parliament of Scotland.....Taking the oath of abjuration a national sin.....The form of swearing by kissing a book, sinful.....The errors of Mr. Simson and Mr. Campbell, with the opposite truths asserted and maintained by the associate presbytery.....Due censure of error in the cases of Mr. Simson and Mr. Campbell neglected by the general assembly.....An expression in the Judicial Testimony concerning the prevalence of error, vindicated.....Two articles of the associate presbytery's acknowledgment of sins, vindicated: one with regard to the general assembly's condemnation of the testimony and declinature of that presbytery; the other with regard to Mr. Whitefield's ministrations and the work said to attend them.....Conclusion of the review of Mr. Willison's objections against the Judicial Testimony of the associate presbytery.....Of the abuse of lots.....Of the evil of the mason oath.

The last conversation led Alexander to doubt the correctness of the account which Mr. Willison gives of the Seceding ministers in his Impartial Testimony. He found, that, though Mr. Willison says, the majority of the assembly, that met in the year 1734, was on the side of peace and truth; and that, though they removed some part of the grounds of the secession, particularly, by repealing two acts; one that had been passed in 1730 against the recording of reasons of dissent, and the other, the act passed in 1732 about the method of planting vacant churches; yet the principal grounds were not removed, but rather aggravated by that assembly. He was surprised to learn from Rufus, that the judicatories of the established church, and not these four ministers, were receding from the constitutional principles of the church of Scotland; and that the former might, therefore, be justly accounted the separatists, while the latter were doing nothing but what the ministers of that church were bound to do according to her acts and constitutions. He wondered to hear, that the ministers who belonged to what Mr. Willison calls the faithful body, preferred the communion of the corrupt party to that of these ministers; who were neither doing, nor proposing to do, any thing but what the faithful body had long urged the judicatories to do; namely, that they should judicially approve the reformation attained by the church of Scotland in the period between 1638 and 1649; and that they should judicially acknowledge and condemn the backslidings of the church from that reformation. Earnestly desirous, therefore, of more information concerning the principles of the secession, Alexander came, one day, to

Rufus' house, and having found him engaged in the perusal of Mr. Wilson's Defence of the Reformation Principles of the church of Scotland, began a conversation with him in the following manner.

Alex. I have usually considered the subjects in dispute between the established church of Scotland and the Seceders as trifling, and the harsh acrimonious manner in which the controversy has been carried on, as disgusting.

Ruf. Have you read this book, which I have in my hand?

Alex. I have sometimes looked into it; but the opinion I entertained of the subject, hindered from reading it.

Ruf. It is a pity, that prejudice has so long debarred you from the pleasure of seeing a firm and impartial adherence to truth and evidence joined with a conscientious endeavour to do justice to an opponent, as eminently exemplified, as I have ever known in any controversial writing. Mr. Wilson had good reason to say, with Paul, *I speak the words of truth and soberness.* Considered as a defence of the secession cause, his work is unanswerable; and the attempt of his opponent to answer it, could neither promote the peace of his own mind, nor the edification of the church of Christ.

Alex. Hereafter I mean to give a work, you recommend so highly, an attentive perusal: at present I wish to have some farther conversation on the grounds of the secession, which you entertained me with an account of, at our last interview. I own, with Mr. Willison, that the assembly's violent extrusion of these ministers was too severe. You have endeavoured to shew, that obstinacy in a course of defection from a pure profession of religion formerly attained, renders it warrantable to secede from a particular church, even when she holds so much of the christian religion, and has so many of God's people in her communion, that she may be called, in a large sense, a true church of Christ. But an advocate for what is termed *catholic communion* asserts, that "the Seceders missed their course, when they rested their "vindication upon this ground, or upon any other than their violent "extrusion."*

Ruf. With regard to the actual event of the *secession*, the sentence of the assembly's commission in 1733, suspending these ministers from the exercise of their office, was, no doubt, the immediate occasion of it; as, by this sentence, they were precluded from bearing a necessary testimony in the way of communion with the established church. It is also allowed, that this sentence increased the grounds of their secession, especially considering that, in 1734, this sentence though upon some political considerations, the synod of Perth and Sterling was then impowered to loose the four ministers from it, was never repealed either materially or formally; and considering, that these ministers pleaded for the repeal of it, not merely in justice to themselves, but to injured truth; and in order to prevent such a sinful act or sentence from being transmitted to future generations as a standing act of the national church. There were, however, other instances of tyranny in the administration, which these ministers produced as grounds of their secession; such as, the continued practice of settling ministers in parishes without the consent of the people; their denouncing the highest censures of the church against ministers who ventured to dis-

* Plea for Catholic Sacramental Communion, page 248, note.

pense sealing ordinances to such of the people as conscientiously declined receiving these ordinances from intruders; and their contemptuous treatment of the representations and petitions of ministers and other church members concerning the public grievances.

Another ground, on which these ministers vindicated their secession, was, that pernicious errors, brought to the bar of the assembly, either received no censure at all, or no due censure; and that the truth was not judicially asserted, as it ought to have been, in express opposition to the terms in which the errors had been taught. The false doctrines, thus connived at, were such as affected the foundations of both natural and revealed religion; as we shall see when we come to consider these errors. The Seceding ministers judged, that, in order to warrant their return to communion with the judicatories of the established church, nothing less was necessary, than a particular condemnation of these errors and a particular assertion of the contrary Divine truths.

Farther, these ministers vindicated their secession on this ground, that they could not discharge the duties incumbent on them as ministers of Christ; while they continued in communion with judicatories, that were obstinately persisting in a course of backsliding. The key of discipline and government as well as that of doctrine ought to be exercised by Christ's ministers. But when the majority in the judicatories of a particular church are going on in a course of defection and refuse to reform, then the smaller number must be reduced to this alternative; they must either leave the majority in order to exercise the key of discipline and government separately; or, continuing in communion with them, give up the exercise of that key into the hands of those, who are manifestly perverting it to purposes quite contrary to the end, for which Christ committed it to his ministers. It is evident, that, in the case supposed, the smaller number ought to take the former course, and jointly exercise the keys, with which Christ has intrusted them, in displaying a banner for his truths and ordinances against all contrary errors and corruptions. If it be urged, that they are a small number, an obscure handful, it must still be answered, that it is not multitude, but truth, that supports a religious cause. There are three important duties which faithful ministers are concerned to discharge. First, they ought not only to preach the truths of Christ individually, but also to assert them judicially, or in their joint capacity, in opposition to any errors by which the people of God are in danger of being seduced. Secondly, they ought not only to preach against public evils individually; but also to condemn them judicially, or in their united capacity; and censure such as are openly chargeable with them, according to the holy discipline that Christ has appointed to be exercised in his church. Thirdly, it is the duty of the ministers of the word to commit the ministerial trust to faithful men, according to the Divine command delivered by the apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 2. The Seceding ministers shew, that their continuing in the communion of the established church, as it is represented by its judicatories, is inconsistent with the faithful discharge of the duty incumbent on them, in these respects, as ministers of Jesus Christ.

Alex. Ministers may discharge the duty of bearing testimony against the wrong acts and decisions of judicatories by dissents and protests, without leaving the communion of the church.

Ruf. These ministers answered this exception; first, by shewing, that they had endeavoured to maintain a testimony in the way of communion by such dissents and protests; and that they had been precluded from continuing to do so by the act in 1730, against recording reasons of dissent from the decisions of the judicatories, and by a violent extrusion from the communion of the church. And, secondly, they answered this exception by giving reasons why such dissents and protests could not, in the present case between them and the judicatories of the established church, be reckoned a sufficient testimony for truth, nor a sufficient discharge of the duty incumbent on them as ministers of Christ. One of these reasons is, that the granting of such dissents and protests to be, in all cases, a sufficient discharge of the duty of ministers with regard to public evils, would open a door to the most corrupt mixture in the house of God. At this rate, under the pretext of such dissents and protests, Arians, Socinians, Arminians and Calvinists may be conjoined in the same ecclesiastical body; a combination which could scarcely be accounted a church confessing the name of Christ. Hence in any particular case, the supposition, that such dissents and protests would discharge the duty of a minister with regard to public evils, ought not to be admitted, without considering the nature and circumstances of these evils. A second reason is, that, while the supreme judicatory of a particular church justifies its unrighteous acts, by which any truth of God lies wounded and bleeding in the streets, without any judicial testimony being given to it, a dissent or protest in the records of the judicatory is not a sufficient discharge of the trust committed to ministers; it is not a fulfilling of their ministry. A few members of a court may have such dissents and protests recorded; and yet be chargeable with tamely surrendering the key of discipline and government into the hands of such as are suppressing Divine truth and supporting error. The protest or dissent of such members bears no proportion to the injury done to truth by the unrighteous decisions of the court; and their refusing to make a public and judicial acknowledgment of the truth, in express opposition to error, is a refusing to give the Redeemer that honour, which belongs to him before a wicked and perverse generation, Matth. xii. 32, 33. Mark viii. 38. A third reason which they gave respected the case of the church of Scotland at that time; namely, that dissents and protests in the records of the judicatories afforded no relief to such as could not conscientiously submit to the ministry of intruders or their supporters; unless the dissenters or protesters would also proceed to act, as distinct judicatories, in sending to the aggrieved such as they might conscientiously receive as sent and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ.

Thus, though the extrusion of these ministers was the immediate occasion of the secession; yet the other public evils already mentioned, in a connected view, and as aggravated by the obstinacy of the judicatories in refusing to acknowledge them and to return to Scotland's covenanted reformation; nay, all the public evils specified in the Judicial Testimony published in 1737, were grounds of the secession, as they were evils belonging to the course of defection from that reformation, and evils against which a consistent and faithful testi-

mony could not be maintained in a way of communion with the established church.*

Alex. Mr. Willison's opinion of the Associate Presbytery's Judicial Testimony, is, That, though there are many good things in it, there are also many mistakes in it, and misrepresentations of facts, very harsh and unsuitable expressions, and bitter reflections against their brethren, and even our worthy forefathers.†

Ruf. Whatever regard is due to Mr. Willison's authority, still a greater regard is due to truth. Such a general charge against the Judicial Testimony of the Associate Presbytery ought not to be admitted without enquiring how it is supported. Has Mr. Willison pointed out these mistakes, misrepresentations, harsh and unsuitable expressions and bitter reflections?

§ 15. *Alex.* I mean to propose the instances he gives of passages blameable in these respects. But, in the first place, I wish to hear what you mean by Scotland's covenanted reformation.

Ruf. By this expression is meant whatever conformity to the word of God was attained by the church of Scotland in doctrine, worship and government. There were two remarkable periods of this reformation. The first was between 1560 and 1596; a period full of memorable events; such as, the abolishing of the pope's authority in Scotland in the year 1560; the adoption of the first confession of faith; the planting of ministers in the generality of parishes through the kingdom; the establishment of the scriptural government of the church in the due subordination of congregational elderships to presbyteries, of presbyteries to synods, and of synods to a general assembly; the adoption of the first and second books of discipline; the swearing and subscribing of the national covenant by persons of all ranks in the years 1581 and 1590. The second period of the reformation in Scotland was between 1638 and 1650. In this period, sound doctrine was more clearly and fully stated in the confession of faith and in the larger and shorter catechisms compiled by the Westminster assembly and received by the church of Scotland, in opposition not only to Popish, but to Arminian and other errors. In this period, the purity of Divine worship was maintained and promoted by the assemby at Glasgow in 1638 declaring the five articles of Perth to be abjured by the national covenant; and still more in the year 1645, by the church's receiving the directory for worship agreed on by the Westminster assembly. The assembly at Glasgow now mentioned asserted the Divine right of presbyterial church government and the intrinsic power of the church to meet and act by virtue of the authority granted to her by Jesus Christ her only Head; and afterward in the year 1645 the assembly received the form of church government agreed on by the Westminster assembly, in which the scripture warrant for presbyterial courts, and their gradual subordination are more particularly declared. This was a covenanting period. The national covenant was renewed in 1638 with a new bond against prelatical innovations. In 1643 the solemn league and covenant was entered into by the body of people of Scotland in conjunction with their neighbours in England and Ireland:

* Mr. Wilson's Defence of Ref. Princ. p. 143, 144. And Mr. Gib's Display, p. 45, 46.

† Impart. Test. page 160.

which league was also renewed in Scotland in 1648, with an acknowledgment of sins and an engagement to duties. In this period, the church honestly endeavoured to attain purity of church communion. Episcopalians, Independents, Anabaptists were not admitted to sacramental communion, till they had acknowledged the sinfulness of their errors and offensive practices. Many acts were passed against evils that are commonly overlooked or connived at; such as, the public exhibition of images of Jesus Christ, the superstitious observation of days, promiscuous dancing, contemptuous or disaffected speeches concerning the cause of God which the church and land had engaged by solemn covenant to maintain. The Lord's work, in this period, was carried on with deep humiliation and mourning. It has been often and justly observed concerning Scotland in 1638, that it might then be called *Bochim*. The parliament of England and the Westminster assembly had monthly fasts. Such are the particulars that characterise Scotland's covenanted reformation.

Alex. Many think the associate presbytery have lavished too much praise on these periods, particularly on the last of them; when these reformers proposed to enjoin submission to presbyterial church government and the taking of the solemn league under civil penalties. With regard to persecution, they have been represented as no less chargeable with it than Charles the first or Archbishop Laud. "The Puritans in this period," says a late writer, "retaliated upon the bishops "and clergy all the ill usage and intolerance of which they had themselves so heavily complained."*

Ruf. The Presbyterian ministers, in this period, though they held the intrinsic power of the church, and her independence on the state in opposition to the Erastian opinion,† were solicitous to have their judicial deeds ratified by the civil authority; and when these were agreeable to the mind of the civil magistrate, he was ready to enact the observance of them under civil penalties. But from the associate presbytery's adherence to the covenanted reformation it cannot be inferred, that they approved the compulsory laws made in its favour. No one can make such an inference, who duly considers the presbytery's limitation of their adherence in these words: "Since the church, "while militant is in an imperfect state, it is not intended to affirm, "that, in the above-mentioned period, there was nothing defective or "wanting as to the beauty and order of the house of God, or that there "was nothing culpable in the administration."

The assertion, however, which you mentioned, of a late writer is a palpable falsehood. When the Puritans obtained the administration of the civil government, did they establish any such courts as those of the star-chamber and high commission? Did they fine, imprison, set in the pillory, and banish any for speaking or writing against presbytery or the solemn league; as many Puritans were used for speaking and writing against prelacy, superstitious ceremonies, and stageplays tending to the corruption of morals? The parliament appointed a committee to receive complaints of the insufficiency or offences of the clergy in the several counties. The consequence was, that many were

* Haweis' Church History, page 272.

† The administration of the discipline and government of the church, according to the Erastians, belongs to the civil magistrate.

ejected from their charges.* But the parliament was so far from using severity, that they ordered the ejected ministers (whatever was the cause of their ejectment,) to receive the fifth part of their former income.† How different was this treatment from that which the Presbyterian ministers met with, upon the restoration of Charles the second, when they were deprived of their livings, without being allowed one farthing; and two or three years after, were banished from cities, market towns, and even their own houses; and were liable to severe fines and imprisonment for venturing sometimes to exercise their ministry! I shall only add with regard to these acts of parliament that enjoined the taking of the solemn league and submission to presbyterial order under civil penalties, allowance should be made for the difference between their circumstances and ours. The case of Scotland at that time, as one observes, was somewhat peculiar in this respect, that the enemies of the reformation of religion in that kingdom, were at the same time, enemies to its civil constitution and liberties. And therefore it cannot be inferred from their having thought it necessary, *in such peculiar circumstances*, to require a profession of adherence to the cause of the reformation in which they were then engaged, under civil penalties, that they would have thought it necessary to require that profession under civil penalties, *in our present circumstances*, when people of different and opposite religious denominations agree in the common character of good and peaceable members of the civil state.‡

As to the praise which the associate presbytery have bestowed on this period, they have stated the grounds of it. Their commendations of what God then did for his church, are confirmed by the testimonies of many faithful ministers who lived in that time.||

* Life of Baxter, part 1st, page 19.

† Pierce's Vindication of the Dissenters, page 214.

‡ Display of the Secession Testimony, vol. 2d, page 323.

|| See Rutherford's and Baillie's Letters, Brown of Wamphray's Apologetical Relation, many testimonies in Naphtali and the Cloud of Witnesses. The notion, which is now generally entertained, of this period, is derived from the caricature of it in Hume's History of England. How different is his account of the Scots reformers and of the members of the long parliament in England from the account given of them by Rapin, whom Hume himself, in his Political Discourses, calls the most judicious of historians! According to Mr. Baillie and other contemporaries who had the best opportunities of being acquainted with the members of that parliament, they were indeed an illustrious band of patriots. But, as a valuable writer observes, "their noble sentiments, their wise and vigorous proceedings in defending the cause of true religion and civil liberty, are seldom to be fully or fairly learned from the admired pages of the later tribe of historiographers; whose partial accounts, distorted pictures, and bad reflections and insinuations exhibit vile libels, instead of histories, of the characters and transactions of the times of reformation." One instance may be given, as it relates to the subject here treated of. "The controversy," says Hume, "between the parties," [to wit, between Charles the first and the long parliament,] "was almost wholly theological, and that of the most frivolous and ridiculous kind. The grievances, which tended chiefly to inflame the parliament and nation, were the surplice, the rails placed about the altar, the bows exacted on approaching it, the liturgy, the breach of the sabbath, embroidered copes, lawn sleeves, the use of the ring in marriage and of the cross in baptism." Just as if the moral evil of introducing such things into the worship of God were small; because the things considered in themselves and without any relation to that worship, are trivial or indifferent: or as if there were little or no evil in gross idolatry; because, as the apostle says, an idol is nothing in the world. Indeed Hume's apology for the superstitions of archbishop Laud might serve as a pretext for the grossest idolatry. "Laud," says he, "corrected the errors of the first reformers,

Alex. Presbyterian divines own, that the magistrate has much power *circa sacra*, but no power *in sacris*, no power that is properly or formally ecclesiastical, his power being only civil.

Ruf. The members of the associate presbytery avoided loose and ambiguous expressions in declaring their principles. One of them observes, that though our divines own that the magistrate has a power *circa sacra*, they always limit or qualify this power; otherwise, I am afraid, adds that judicious writer, that under the terms, much power *circa sacra*, the most part of what Erastians plead for may be included; such as, the subordination of church courts to the civil magistrate, the liberty of appeal to him from their sentences, and the delivering up to his disposal the whole external order and government of the church.* But it has always been uniformly taught by the ministers belonging to the communion of the associate presbytery, that the judicial cognisance of doctrines, of Divine worship, of the discipline and government of the church, as revealed in the holy scriptures, and the judicial censure of contrary opinions and practices, belong exclusively to the church of Christ; and that no authoritative judgement concerning matters of religion is competent to civil magistrates as such.

§ 16. *Alex.* Before I bring forward Mr. Willison's objections against the Judicial Testimony of the associate presbytery, I may propose one or two that have been offered by others; particularly one with regard to the public resolutions, as they were called, of the commission of the assembly in 1650. Some consider it as a doubtful matter how far the commission or the assembly was chargeable with sin in proposing or approving these resolutions.

Ruf. These resolutions were proposed by the commission in answer to two insnaring questions put to them by the king and parliament with regard to those who discovered disaffection both to the cause of civil liberty and to the covenanted reformation. First, it was asked, whether such might be admitted into the army? and the commission granted, that in a case of great and evident necessity, all fencible persons† in the land should be raised and permitted to fight against Cromwell's party; hoping, however, that officers of known integrity and affection to the cause of God will be taken special notice of.

Some time afterward, the other question was put to the commission, whether, or not, such persons might be admitted to be members of the committee of estates and other places of civil trust, on satisfying the kirk for the offence for which they were excluded? and whether the act of classes, which had been passed only about a year before, and by which some were excluded for life, some for ten, some for five years, might not be repealed? and the commission by another resolution gave way to the repeal.

The article of the Judicial Testimony asserting the sinfulness of these resolutions appears highly reasonable in the first place, because

"and presented to the affrightened and astonished mind some sensible exterior observances which might occupy it during its religious exercises and abate the violence of its disappointed efforts. The thought no longer bent on that Divine and mysterious essence, so superior to the narrow capacities of mankind, was able by means of the new model of devotion to relax itself in the contemplation of pictures, postures, vestments, buildings." That a professed infidel should write such things, is no wonder; but to find them imbibed and often repeated by professed christians and protestants is deplorable indeed!

* Wilson's Defence, page 268. † Or persons able to bear arms.

these resolutions were contrary to the acknowledgment of sins and engagement to duties with which they had a little before accompanied their renovation of the solemn league. In their acknowledgment of sins, they say, "To this day we have not made it our study, that judi-"catories and armies should consist of, and that places of power and "trust should be filled with, men of a blameless and christian conver-"sation, of known integrity, and approven fidelity, affection and zeal "unto the cause of God." In their engagement to duties they say, "We shall, according to our places and callings, endeavour that judi-"catories and all places of power and trust, both in kirk and state, "may consist of, and be filled with men of known good affection "to the cause of God and of a blameless and christian conversation." By such a solemn confession and engagement, the sin of these resolutions, as the Judicial Testimony says, was more aggravated than it would otherwise have been.

In the next place, the resolutions corrupted the communion of the church: for, as the associate presbytery say in their acknowledgment of sins, "these enemies to a covenanted work of reformation were sud-"denly received into full church communion and fellowship, in oppo-"sition to the act of assembly appointing such disaffected persons to "be censured." With regard to their profession of satisfying the kirk, there was so little appearance of sincerity in it from their known principles and habitual conduct, that bishop Burnet in his history calls it a mock penitence and a matter of great scandal.

In the third place, the consequences of these public resolutions were most deplorable. The church was thereby divided. They who adhered to these resolutions were called resolutioners. A considerable body on the other hand of ministers and elders who declared against them, were called protesters. Great numbers, who by means of these resolutions got into places of power and trust, were afterwards abettors of abjured prelacy, of the impious acts condemning the solemn league and covenant as treasonable, and of a bloody persecution of all who owned that sacred engagement.

§ 17. *Alex.* Some have thought, that the Presbyterian ministers, who, in the reign of Charles the second accepted his indulgences, are censured too severely by the associate presbytery. Many of them were godly ministers.

Ruf. The associate presbytery testified against these indulgences; because they flowed from the king's supremacy; by which he assumed that government of the church which the Lord Jesus has appointed her officers only to administer. As this supremacy was exercised in granting these indulgences; so it was acknowledged and submitted to in accepting them. By virtue of an authority derived from this supremacy, the privy council assumed the actual exercise of church power, in judging of the gifts and qualifications of ministers; in planting and transplanting them at their pleasure; in framing and prescribing canons for the exercise of the ministerial office; acts, which by virtue of Christ's institution are competent to church officers only, being quite beyond the sphere of the civil magistrate.

The associate presbytery also condemns these indulgences on account of the restrictions to which ministers were thereby subjected in the exercise of their ministry. By these indulgences, they were for-

bidden to lecture on any part of scripture before sermon; they were prohibited from departing out of the bounds of the parish where they resided, without being permitted by the bishop of the diocess; from preaching in any other places than kirks; and from admitting to their communion, or pulpit, any minister *not indulged* under pain of being deposed by the bishop of the diocess. And while they were strictly forbidden in these indulgences to utter any seditious expressions in the pulpit or elsewhere, it is plain from the acts of the parliament and council at this time, that faithful ministerial freedom in testifying against the perfidy and treachery of all ranks of persons in the violation of the solemn league, was forbidden under the name of seditious expression.

The Judicial Testimony admits, that many of those, who were insnared by these indulgences, were otherwise eminent lights. But their godliness could neither justify their acceptance of such indulgences, nor remove the guilt in which the land was thereby involved. A most faithful and zealous minister, Mr. M'Ward, in a letter subjoined to his "Earnest Contendings," says of these indulged ministers; "All "of us will grant, that many of them are godly men; but, alas! their "godliness, as it has been pleaded, is more prejudicial to the work "and interest of Christ, than the ungodliness of all the prelates and "curates."

Alex. It may be granted, that this indulgence, on the magistrate's part, was a sinful encroachment upon Christ's headship over his church. But as to worthy ministers, who, as Mr. Willison says, always refused, that they accepted the indulgence upon the terms of the king and council, (though they preached in the churches assigned them by these rulers,) and who did not observe these terms; and who, on that account, were afterwards turned out; it would be hard to charge them with approving the king's usurped supremacy.*

Ruf. The act of the privy council concerning the indulgence specified the terms on which it was granted; and therefore the sin of ministers in accepting the indulgence is not disproved, but acknowledged; when it is said, that they did not approve nor observe the terms on which it was offered. For it is plain, that they ought not in that case to have accepted it. The declaration of Alexander Blair minister at Galston when called before the council, was highly proper. Letting the copy of the instructions, which they had given him, drop out of his hand, he said, "That he could receive no instructions from them to "regulate him in the exercise of his ministry; as, in doing so, he would "not be Christ's ambassador, but theirs."†

Alex. Mr. Willison adds, That God was pleased to glorify his sovereign grace in giving remarkable success to the ministry of those indulged in churches as well as to that of those who preached in the fields; between whom there continued much love and peace for many years; until some began to condemn the indulged so far as to preach separation from them: upon which followed many unwarrantable divisions, the fruits of which continue to this day.

Ruf. The success of these ministers in preaching the gospel will not prove that their acceptance of the indulgence was not sinful. For, as Mr. Willison himself intimates, this success is to be ascribed to the

* Impartial Test. page 47. † Crookshank's History, part 1. chap. 9.

Divine good pleasure, and to free and sovereign grace. The rule, by which we are to judge, whether any practice is right or wrong, is not eventual success, but the word of God.

This compliance, however, with the persecutors of the Lord's witnesses, at that time, tended to hinder, and not to promote, the success of the gospel; particularly, as it was designed to suppress the preaching of the gospel in the fields, which was then most faithful and successful. Many have entertained an opinion of this matter, very different from Mr. Willison's. I could name, says Patrick Walker, an honest sufferer for truth in that period, some of those indulged ministers, who, when dying, confessed, that from the time in which they were taken in that snare, it was never with them as it was formerly; and who doubted whether, after that, they had been instrumental in edifying one soul, or in any public good. He adds, that many people, who had heard them, avowed, that the persecuted gospel in the fields, had another sort of relish and sweetness.*

It is very unjust to reproach those who bore testimony against the acceptance of the indulgences, such as Messrs. Brown, M'Ward, Cargil and Cameron, as causing mournful divisions among the professed friends of the covenanted reformation. But a principal cause of these divisions, both in the intention of the enemies of reformation, and, in fact, was the acceptance of the indulgences: the bitter fruit of which acceptance was, the defection continued to this day, from the reformation which had been attained. On the other hand, it was, in a great measure, by means of these faithful ministers and people, who contended earnestly against the acceptance of the indulgences, that the ordinances of the gospel have been transmitted to us in purity.

On the whole, it cannot well be denied, that the acceptance of the indulgences, at that time, whether considered in itself or in its consequences, is justly represented as a ground of humiliation, and, while the evil of it is not duly acknowledged and lamented, of God's controversy with his people.

Alex. I shall now propose the instances by which Mr. Willison endeavours to support his charge against the Judicial Testimony of the associate presbytery.

§ 18. The first, I take notice of, is their condemning all the old persecuted Presbyterian ministers, who accepted of the liberty of preaching under James' toleration, as involving the land in heinous guilt; which he says, is a most rash and uncharitable censure of those worthies, who were honored to be great sufferers for truth; men of eminent piety and tenderness, who were signally owned of God during that liberty; and who never saw cause to repent of it to their dying hour.†

Ruf. The memory of several of these ministers is indeed precious and savoury. So is the memory of many other christians, in whose conduct some things may be justly blamed.

There have been many ministers in the Episcopal and Independent communions, who have shown piety and tenderness of conscience, whom God has made instrumental in winning souls, and who never

* Remarkable Passages of the Lives of Messrs. Peden, Semple, Cameron, &c. p. 218.

† Imp. Test. page 222.

saw cause to repent of their errors in relation to church government. Some of the saints practised polygamy for which we do not read, that they ever exercised any particular repentance. Whatever any of the saints have attained, and however useful they were through the sovereign grace of God, it is warrantable to compare their conduct in the house of God with his word, and to disapprove any part of it which we find to be not according to that Supreme rule. Hence, it is evident, that however just the character be, which Mr. Willison gives of these old persecuted ministers, it ought not to hinder us from attending to the reasons why their acceptance of king James' toleration with addresses of thanks, was acknowledged by the associate presbytery to be a public evil. These reasons are chiefly two.

The first is, that this toleration proceeded, as Mr. Willison himself observes, from a vile spring, namely, the king's absolute dispensing power. If the parliament had abrogated their own penal statutes against the genuine members of the church of Scotland, it would have been a mercy to be gratefully acknowledged. But that which these ministers accepted, and for which they gave addresses of thanks, was a very different thing: it was the king's proclamation, in which he claimed and exercised an absolute power of suspending and disabling all the laws against the papists. No sincere protestant or lover of civil liberty, ought to reckon the associate presbytery rash or uncharitable for their disapprobation of the countenance given by these ministers to what came from such an execrable fountain, and tended, as the historian Rapin tells us, to establish the popish, upon the ruins of the protestant religion.

The second reason why this toleration ought not to have been accepted, (much less praised, in an address of thanks, *as a gracious and surprising favour,)* is, that it was granted upon this express condition, that "they were not to teach what might anywise tend to alienate the heart of the people from the king or his government;" that is, they were not to preach against popery or arbitrary power. Mr. Willison, in his Testimony, grants, that if this was the meaning of the words now mentioned, (and that it was so, no one acquainted with the history of James' reign can doubt,) it was sinful in any man to comply with this condition. "Ah!" says he, speaking of this very matter, "we and our fathers have sinned, and we have cause to be "deeply humbled, both for their sins and our own."* Thus, if it was rash and uncharitable to acknowledge the sinfulness of the conduct of these ministers, Mr. Willison himself is blameable as well as the associate presbytery; for he makes the same acknowledgment. We have here only to lament his inconsistency, and the prejudice he discovers against the associate presbytery.

§ 19. *Alex.* Mr. Willison says, the associate presbytery, in their Act and Testimony, have cast slanders on their worthy ancestor and their mother church. One of these slanders is, Their alledging that the assembly in 1690, which consisted of many confessors and old sufferers, made no particular acknowledgment of the backslidings of the land under prelacy.†

Ruf. I shall read the whole passage, as it stands in their Declaration and Testimony. "It was the laudable practice, in reforming

* Imp. Test. pages 50, 51. † Ibid. page 169.

"times, to condemn all steps of defection; and duly to censure such "as were guilty of public backsliding. Accordingly, by the assembly "that met in the year 1638,—all the prelates, being ringleaders in the "apostacy, were deposed; and some of them excommunicated. Also, "in the said reforming period, they returned to the Lord, by a par-"ticular acknowledgment and confession of the sins of the ministry, "and of the whole land; and by renewing their solemn covenant en-"gagements. But the general assembly, that met in the year, 1690, "made no particular acknowledgment of the many heinous backslid-"ings of the former period. But, on the contrary, when many lamen-"table steps of defection and apostacy were complained of in a large "paper offered to the foresaid assembly in 1690, by Mr. Alexander "Shields and other two ministers; the said assembly was so far from "attempting the redress of their grievances, that they approved the "report of their committee of overtures, calling the contents of that "paper, *unreasonable and impracticable proposals, uncharitable and "injurious reflections, tending rather to kindle contentions than to "compose divisions.*"

The associate presbytery is here comparing the conduct of the assembly in 1638 with that of the assembly in 1690. The *former* acted as men resolved upon a thorough reformation; the *latter*, as men afraid of proceeding farther than they could, consistently with their interest or their ease. The *former* were explicit and particular in confessing the defections, that had taken place in the preceding period, that is, from 1596 to the year 1638, as breaches of their covenant with God; but the *latter* neglected to make any *such particular* confession of the manifold instances of Scotland's apostacy and perfidy in the reigns of Charles the second and his brother.

Alex. Mr. Willison tells us, that the general assembly which met in October 1690, (about two years after the revolution) appointed a national fast; in the causes of which they enumerated a great many sins of the land both in the former and present times: and among other sins of the preceding period, the introducing of prelacy, the imposing and taking of unlawful oaths, the shedding of innocent blood, the general fainting under the late persecutions.*

Ruf. Though, in these causes of a fast, the introduction of prelacy is acknowledged as a sin; yet it is not declared to be contrary to their national oath and confessions of faith. Again, it is mentioned in these causes of a fast, that much innocent blood had been shed; but it is not said to be the innocent blood of the witnesses of Jesus; blood, that was shed for the testimony which they held. These causes make no mention of some of the most notorious evils of the period between 1650 and 1688; such as, the public resolutions; the breaking, burning and burying of the solemn covenants, which the nation had sworn; the sin of ministers in accepting of indulgences. Nor, in these causes of a fast, was there any approbation given of the testimonies and sufferings of a faithful remnant in that trying period for a covenanted reformation. Nay, the following remark inserted in this paper is too much in the style of the enemies of these witnesses: *some managed their zeal with too little discretion and meekness.* But it is not said who were liable to this charge. In short, it is evident, that these causes of a

* Imp. Test. page 58.

fast were, by no means, such a particular acknowledgment of the many heinous backslidings of the former period, as accorded with the example of that faithful reforming assembly at Glasgow. Even Mr. Willison expresses a wish, that these causes had been more full.*

Alex. Mr. Willison says, that when Messrs. Linning, Shields and Boyd were received into fellowship with the church of Scotland and her judicatories after the revolution, these ministers gave in a long paper for the exoneration of their consciences, bearing testimony to what they judged right, and against what they believed to be wrong.†

Ruf. Mr. Willison, when he professed to give a fair and impartial testimony against the sins of the church at that time, ought not to have passed over this paper, and the treatment it met with, so slightly. The particulars stated in it were of such importance, "that, if they "should be neglected," said these three honest ministers, "the revo-"lution settlement will be death to us, instead of a reviving."

"1st, It was proposed, that the assembly should enquire into the "various degrees of compliance with the introduction of abjured pre-"lacy in the preceding reigns; particularly, by hearing, or, in other-"wise owning, the Episcopal ministers."

"2dly, That they should enquire into the scandalous violation of "the covenants, national and solemn league, in the preceding reigns; "particularly by subscribing or swearing tests or bonds contrary to "the covenanted reformation."

"3dly, That they should consider the encroachments that had been "made by the civil magistrate upon the rights and liberties of the gos-"pel church; and how far any ministers had submitted to, or approved, "these encroachments by their acceptance of what was called the "*indulgence;* or by their censuring the faithful for discovering the "sinfulness of it."

"4thly, That they should review the conduct of those ministers who "had sent addresses of thanks to James the second for his toleration, "in which he avowed the exercise of despotic power in dispensing "with the laws of the nation; and suspended the liberty of preaching "the gospel upon this condition, that ministers should say nothing that "would have any tendency to alienate the minds of the people from "a popish and tyrannical government."

"5thly, That they should take into consideration the sinfulness of "neglecting the renovation of the buried national covenants, and the "assertion of the obligation of them: and that the national covenant "and solemn league should be renewed in an accommodation of them "to the present time, with a solemn acknowledgment of the public "breaches of these covenants."

"6thly, That they should testify against the silence of many, or "their ambiguous way of speaking, about the wickedness of the perse-"cuting laws; by which so many, great and small, were involved in "the guilt of persecution; and the land was defiled with blood."

"Lastly, That enquiry should be made into a prevailing report, that "some were admitted to sealing ordinances in this church, who had

* Imp. Test. pages 58, 59. † Ibid. page 57.

"sworn the test,* and persecuted the pious confessors of the truth in "various ways; and that others, who had habitually complied with "prelacy, were admitted to the office of ruling elders, and even to the "ministry, without being required to make any public acknowledgment "of their offences."

Though the committee of overtures allowed, that there were several good things in this paper; yet the particulars stated in it as necessary to the redressing of grievances; such as, the express condemning of national steps of defection in the preceding period, the renewing of the covenants, the asserting of the rights and privileges of Christ's spiritual kingdom; were, in general, represented by the committee in their report, and considered by the assembly, as unseasonable and impracticable proposals. This was an evil much to be lamented; of which Mr. Willison makes no acknowledgment.

Alex. Mr. Willison tells us, that, in this assembly, there was a great gathering of old, banished, suffering ministers, who had survived the long storm of persecution. These ministers had several general meetings before this. In one of these meetings they agreed, that the first day of the assembly's meeting should be kept as a day of solemn fasting and humiliation; which was observed accordingly. This church having been long overwhelmed with ruin, the assembly had now much work to do, to remove some of the rubbish, and establish some order. They had multitudes of curates still remaining in the churches to deal with; they had civil rulers urging a coalition with, or comprehension of, many of them; they had rents among themselves to heal; and many other difficulties, to grapple with. Amidst all these, they did a great many good things; such as, appointing all ministers, elders and probationers to subscribe the confession of faith; and making acts for keeping the Lord's day; for erecting schools in the Highlands, and providing them with Bibles in the Erse language.†

Ruf. Such good things as these ought, indeed, to be commemorated with approbation and thankfulness. But they will not prove, that it was not the duty of the associate presbytery to acknowledge, as they have done, the defects and the unfaithfulness of the assembly at that time. Mr. Willison himself says; "We wish they had done more to "retrieve the honour of these broken and burnt covenants by openly "asserting the lawfulness and obligation of them, and applying to the "civil powers for their concurrence to the renovation of them." But Mr. Willison ought not to have represented the concurrence of civil rulers as necessary to the church's renovation of her solemn covenant

* The Test was framed by the parliament, August 31st, 1681. At first, only persons in public office, civil, military and ecclesiastical, were obliged to take it. But afterwards it was imposed on persons of all ranks as *a test of loyalty;* and the refusal of it was made a pretence for persecuting great numbers to death. This oath, as Hume justly allows, was a medley of contradiction and absurdity. In the first part of it, the protestant religion contained in *the first confession of faith* is professed, and all principles and doctrines inconsistent with it are renounced. And yet in the following part of this oath the king's supremacy in its utmost extent, is asserted, again and again; and also the unlawfulness of resisting the king, on any pretext whatsoever; the obligation of the covenants, national and solemn league, is disowned, and the government of the church, then established by law, is approved. How great was the guilt of the general assembly at the revolution, in passing over the atrocious public evil of taking this abominable oath, without enquiry, and without any particular acknowledgment!

† Imp. Test. page 57.

engagements. The assembly's omission of plain duty, on account of the apprehensions they were under of meeting with strenuous opposition from great men in power, is not to be justified.

Many other honest ministers of the church of Scotland, as well as the associate presbytery have acknowledged and lamented the unfaithfulness of the proceedings of this church at the revolution.

Mr. Hog, minister at Carnock, in the account of his life written by himself,* complains; "That after the happy revolution, under the specious names of prudence and just moderation, the testimony of former times was suppressed; and it was not thought a proper season to intermeddle with our covenants or with defections from them; that we might not give the least umbrage to those that were in the government; many of whom were not of our principles, and some had been leaders in the former persecution."

Mr. Dickson, another minister of the church of Scotland, in a letter to a friend, a little before his death, which took place in the year 1700, expresses himself in a very pathetic manner concerning the settlement and state of that church after the revolution. "It is many years" says he, "since the Sun fell low upon Scotland. Many a dismal day hath it seen since 1649. At that time, our reformation mounted towards its zenith; but since we left building on that excellent foundation laid by our honoured forefathers, we have still moved from ill to worse; and are likely to do so still more, until we slide ourselves out of sight and sense of a reformation. We have been lately favoured with a wonderful deliverance from the slavery of a heaven-daring enemy; but *not one line of reformation is pencilled upon our deliverance.* It is a long time, since our solemn covenant engagements looked pale. Let us never dream of a reviving Spirit among us, till there be a reviving respect for the solemn vows of God. If there was but a little appearance of that Spirit which actuated our worthy forefathers in our public assemblies and preachings, you would see a wonderful alteration in the face of our affairs: the fields, I assure you, would look white, near to harvest."

Among the ministers and elders who composed the general assembly in 1690, there was, no doubt, a number who had suffered for the truth. But it seems too evident, that the generality of them had complied, more or less, with the public evils of the preceding period.

Alex. Perhaps the evils you mean, are alluded to in the causes of a fast, which were mentioned a little while ago; in which the general assembly acknowledged, that there had been much fainting, under the late persecution, even of eminent ministers, by either yielding to the defections and evils of the time, or not giving seasonable and necessary testimonies against them.

Ruf. Such public evils ought to have been specified; and the share, that ministers had in them, openly and particularly acknowledged to the glory of God. The truth is, when we consider how much the greater part of the members of this assembly had complied with the public evils of the preceding reigns; when we recollect the distance and reserve, which had been visible in the conduct of most of them towards Mr. Renwick, and others, who had suffered for the truth; and their treatment of the paper offered by Mr. Shields and two other

* Quoted in Mr. Wilson's Defence of the Reformation Principles, page 260.

ministers, we have scarcely any reason to consider this assembly as well affected to the revival of the covenanted reformation. I have no doubt, that Mr. Ebenezer Erskine had sufficient ground to assert in a printed sermon from Amos ix. 11, that "when the Lord turned "back the captivity of this church at the revolution, there was no due "enquiry after the shedding of blood. Nay," said he, "instead of "that, men who had dipt their hands in the blood of the saints, were "admitted to sit as constituent members in the supreme judicatories "of this church."

Alex. Another instance of slander, with which Mr. Willison charges the associate presbytery, is their asserting, that the assembly in 1690, declared, that the perfidious prelates were not to be deposed for their treacherous defection.* I suppose, he knew, that no such thing was ever declared by that assembly.

Ruf. In order to vindicate the passage of the associate presbytery's Testimony, which Mr. Willison refers to, from the charge of slander, I shall read it, and add a remark or two on some of the terms used by the presbytery.

"Neither have such as made defection been duly censured; but, "on the contrary, the index of unprinted acts of assembly, bears a "public declaration by the moderator, That the assembly would de-"pose no incumbents, simply for their judgement anent the govern-"ment of the church; that is, they declare, that the perfidious pre-"lates and their underlings were not to be deposed for their treache-"rous defection from the covenanted principles of this church. And, "in consistency with this declaration, the assembly in 1696, enjoin "their commission, (as several assemblies afterwards did,) to receive "into ministerial communion such of the late conforming ministers, "as, having qualified themselves according to law, shall subscribe "the Formula, which was then framed for them: whereby they were "not bound to acknowledge, that Presbyterian government is founded "in the word of God; but only that the church government, as now "settled by law, is the only government of this church.—Upon sign-"ing the above Formula, a great many prelatical ministers and elders "were admitted into the body of the church, and had access to sit in "judicatories, without being required to give any evidence of their "repentance or sorrow for their heinous and scandalous defection."

The proposition, which Mr. Willison calls a slander, is a necessary consequence of the facts here related: if the latter be true, the former can be no slander. By *the perfidious prelates* the associate presbytery meant such as had once professed the covenanted Presbyterian principles, and were guilty of a treacherous defection from them. Such were the incumbents or ministers of parishes, who, in the preceding reigns, had conformed to episcopacy. If they were not to be censured for their judgement concerning episcopacy, neither were they to be censured for their practice according to that judgement, in the preceding period.

The injunction of the assembly's commission to receive ministers, who had thus conformed, into ministerial communion, upon their subscribing the Formula which was then framed for them, puts the

* Imp. Test. page 169.

matter out of all doubt. For if these incumbents, who had evidently made treacherous defection from the covenanted principles of the church of Scotland, were to be received into communion upon their subscription of a Formula, which contained no proper acknowledgment of these principles; it must follow, that they were not to be deposed, nor indeed censured at all, for their defection; which is justly called treacherous; as having been a deliberate violation of the engagements which they had entered into, before the introduction of episcopacy, to maintain Presbyterian principles. That the moderator's declaration before mentioned, was the mind of the majority of that assembly, appears, from its being recorded in the assemblies' books, and referred to in the index of their unprinted acts; while it accords with their conduct afterwards in receiving those who had conformed to episcopacy without requiring any acknowledgment of the evil of their conformity to it. Mr. Willison denies none of these facts. How, then, can he call the plain and necessary consequence of them slander?

§ 20. *Alex.* Mr. Willison adds, that the associate presbytery cast slander on the parliament of Scotland, which met immediately after the Revolution, when they represent that parliament as imposing the oath of allegiance to exclude the oath of the covenant.*

Ruf. In order to establish the charge of slander, Mr. Willison ought to have given the words of the passage he refers to. Having observed, that the parliament appointed the oath of allegiance to be taken in place of any other oaths imposed by the laws and acts of preceding parliaments,—the presbytery adds these words: "Though "it may be said, this had respect to the oaths imposed during the per-"secuting period; yet, the terms in which the act is conceived, ap-"pear plainly to exclude the oath of the covenant, which contains a "very solemn test of allegiance to the sovereign; especially, when it is "considered that the act rescissory, (whereby a covenanted reforma-"tion was razed, and the acts and deeds of that covenanting period "were declared seditious and treasonable,) was not repealed; and "also, that the draught of an act for excluding such as had a share in "the oppressions of the former period, from places of public trust, "was laid aside, after it had been twice read in parliament. Hence, "such persons were admitted into places of public trust and power, "as were, both in principle and practice, opposite to the covenanted "reformation."

Thus, considering the disposition which the parliament discovered towards the solemn league and covenant, in leaving it buried under the act rescissory, and in shewing favour to its enemies,—there is no reason to doubt the justice of this inference; That, as they declared in the act referred to, that no *oath*, which the subjects were directed to take by any preceding laws or acts of parliament, was now to be accounted a sufficient test of allegiance to the sovereign; so they meant, that the solemn league and covenant, (the taking of which they well knew, had been enjoined by laws and acts of preceding parliaments in the reforming period,) was not to be accounted such a test, or considered as laying the subjects under any obligation to the allegiance due to the sovereign. It appears, then, that it was not only

* Imp. Test. page 169.

from the parliament's passing an act imposing an oath of allegiance; but from the manner in which the act was expressed, and from the circumstances which attended the passing of it, that the associate presbytery inferred the parliament's intention of excluding the solemn league and covenant.

Alex. Some have blamed the associate presbytery, for saying in their Testimony, that by the parliament's act of settlement at the revolution, a retrogade motion is made near an hundred years backward; and all the legal securities in the covenanting period from 1638 to 1650 are overlooked and passed by; and that all the acts of the first parliament of Charles the second, together with the infamous act rescissory in 1662, by which the covenanted reformation was razed, and the acts and deeds of that covenanting period were declared seditious and treasonable are left untouched.

Ruf. In the covenanting period, several acts of parliament were passed in favour of reformation; such as, the parliament's ratifying, in 1640, the acts of the general assembly ordaining episcopal government to be held unlawful; their rescinding all laws giving places of civil power and trust to ministers of the gospel; their ratifying the act of the general assembly authorising the solemn league and covenant, which was an engagement to endeavour the preservation of the reformed religion of the church of Scotland, in discipline and government as well as in doctrine and worship, and also the advancement of the reformation in the kingdoms of England and Ireland in the same respects; their ratifying in 1649 the act of the general assembly approving the Westminster confession of faith, and asserting the intrinsic power which the church has received from Christ to have synods as often as is necessary for her welfare; their acts forbidding persons that were malignant and disaffected to the covenanted work of reformation to be employed in places of power and trust; and abolishing patronages as a popish custom, having no warrant in God's word. Among the acts of the first session of the first parliament of Charles the second, in 1661, an infamous act rescissory was passed, by which the parliaments of the covenanting period formerly mentioned were rescinded, and all their acts and deeds were declared null and void. Another infamous act rescissory was passed in the second session of the same parliament, in 1662, by which the covenanted reformation was razed, and the acts of that covenanting period were declared seditious and treasonable. The solemn covenants, national and solemn league, were, by that act, declared to be in themselves unlawful oaths; and, therefore, all acts and constitutions approving them, were annulled. These acts rescissory were not repealed by the act of settlement at the revolution.

Alex. It has been inferred from the general clauses in the act of settlement at the revolution, [viz. "hereby reviving, ratifying and "confirming all laws against popery and papists, for the maintenance "and preservation of the true reformed protestant religion, and for "the true church of Christ within this kingdom:" And after the mentioning of several acts hereby rescinded, it follows, "with all "other acts, laws, statutes, ordinances and proclamations, contrary "or prejudicial to, inconsistent with, or derogatory from the protest-"ant religion and Presbyterian government now established,"] that

the acts rescissory were included among the acts, statutes and proclamations mentioned in that clause; and materially rescinded, so far as any of them were contrary to the religion and church government established by this act; an act, which Mr. Willison says, rescinded all the unrighteous acts of the preceding reigns against the church.*

Ruf. But such general clauses, in any act of parliament, must be understood according to the particulars specified in that act; and, therefore, the general clauses in this act of settlement, must be understood consistently with the parliament's leaving the acts rescissory before mentioned unrepealed; and consistently with the account which the parliament made of the proceedings of the church and state in the period between 1638 and 1650, as illegal and treasonable. The manner in which presbyterial church government is restored in the act of settlement shews, that the parliament purposely overlooked the acts of the period now mentioned, or rather considered them as annulled by the act rescissory. In that act of settlement, the parliament say, *they ratify the Presbyterian church government and discipline established by an act in the year* 1592, *and thereafter received by the general consent of the nation*, while no notice is taken of the legal securities that had been given to Presbyterian church government and discipline in the period between 1638 and 1650. That the parliament, in that act, did not consider the acts of parliament in the covenanting period as in force, appears also, from their reserving the part of the act in 1592 which related to patronages for farther consideration; for, they could not have done so, if they had considered patronages as abolished by the act of parliament passed in 1649. In short, it is unreasonable to pretend that these acts rescissory were repealed on account of general clauses in an act of parliament, such as, that in the act authorising the confession of faith and books of discipline: [hereby reviving, ratifying and confirming all laws against popery and papists, and for the maintenance and preservation of the true reformed protestant religion, and for the true church of Christ;] while such general expressions could not be justly understood as extending to laws that were annulled by acts rescissory, which were left untouched by that act; and while these acts rescissory are retained in the body of the standing laws of Scotland; and while it is well known that in the law books and in the practice of civil courts, neither the parliaments of Scotland in the period between 1638 and 1650, nor the laws passed by them, are considered as of any authority.

Alex. If presbyterial church government was established, it seems not material to enquire what preceding acts of parliament were referred to in the settlement of it.

Ruf. It is, however, material to observe, that the settlement of presbytery by the act of parliament in 1592, was by no means to be so much approved, as the settlement of it in the covenanting period between 1638 and 1650. First, because by the act in 1592, the general assembly was not allowed, when the king or his commissioner was present, to exercise the right of nominating and appointing the time and place of their next meeting; in which restriction there was a manifest encroachment on the intrinsic power and independence of the church of Christ. Secondly, because there was no reference in

* Imp. Test. page 54.

the parliament's settlement of presbytery in 1592, as there was in the period between 1638 and 1650, to preceding acts of the general assembly, determining it to be of Divine right and institution, and condemning prelacy as contrary to the word of God.

Alex. The Westminster confession of faith was authorized by that parliament.

Ruf. There were, however, two evils in the parliament's manner of authorizing the Westminster confession. One was, the omission of any reference to the adoption of the confession by the act of the general assembly in 1647, rendering the confession less clear and explicit with regard to the church's intrinsic power which is asserted in that act. The other evil was, the parliament's taking upon them to prescribe, by their own sole authority, what the church was to receive as her confession of faith. They say, in the act of settlement, "They "ratify the confession of faith now read in their presence, as the public "and avowed confession of this church;" without taking any notice of the act of the assembly in 1647; a manner of ratifying the confession highly Erastian. It may not at all detract from the independence of two nations, for the constituted authority of the one to ratify a commendable act already passed into a law by the constituted authority of the other; such ratification being no more in effect than a sort of recommendation of that act. But it would be inconsistent with such independence, for one of these nations to pass such an act binding on the other, without referring to any former act of that other. So it was contrary to the independence of the church, for the parliament to establish the confession of faith, without referring to the former act of the general assembly receiving and approving it.

Alex. The associate presbytery represent the taking of the oath of abjuration* as a national sin, which, Mr. Willison says, they cannot make out.†

Ruf. He does not venture, however, to say, that the taking of it was no sin: and, if it was a sin at all, it must have been a *national* sin; because the oath was imposed by the civil government upon all in civil and military trust; and afterwards, upon the ministers of the church of Scotland. It was objected to this oath, that it was an acknowledgment of the whole constitution as it was settled at the union between the two nations, and as it included the legal securities given to the establishment of prelacy in England; and that it bore a reference to some acts of the English parliament, wherein it was required,

* The part of the oath of abjuration which was the subject of controversy, runs in the following terms. "I do faithfully promise to the utmost of my power to support, main-"tain and defend the succession of the crown against him (that is the Pretender) and all "other persons whatsoever, *as* the same is and stands settled, by an act entitled an act "declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and settling the succession of the crown "to her present Majesty, and the heirs of her body, being protestants: and as the same, "by another act entitled an act for the farther limitation of the crown, and better se-"curing the rights and liberties of the subject, is and stands settled and entailed to the "Princess Sophia Electress and Dutchess Dowager of Hanover, and the heirs of her "body, being protestants."—By the change which king George the first got the parliament to make in the terms of this oath, WHICH was substituted for AS; so as to run thus; "I promise to defend the succession of the crown, WHICH succession is and stands settled "by an act entitled an act for the further limitation of the crown," &c. But this change makes no real alteration in the sense of the oath.

† Impart. Test. page 221.

as a qualification in the successor to the crown, that he should be of the communion of the church of England, and should maintain that church, as by law established. Other objections were offered, and answers given to them; but that which I have now mentioned with regard to prelacy, could never be resolved to the satisfaction of such as had a due regard to the obligation, which the whole land was under from the solemn league and covenant, to seek by all scriptural means the extirpation of prelacy.

Mr. Willison could not be ignorant, that, in general, the most judicious and faithful ministers in Scotland refused to take this oath; and that, on the other hand, the takers of it were mostly such as afterwards fell in with other corrupt measures. Mr. Boston, in his Memoirs, informs us, that, when the assembly met in the year 1712, the lawfulness of the oath of abjuration was debated *pro* and *con* in a committee of the whole house. "All I had thereby," says he, "was, that the "principles on which the answers to the objections against taking that "oath were founded, seemed to be of such latitude, that by them any "oath might pass."—"Being come home," adds he, "I did this day "spend some time in prayer for light from the Lord about that oath. "And thereafter entering on to read the prints I had on it, in order "to form a judgement about it, I immediately fell on the act, whereby "it was first of all framed and imposed, and finding thereby the de-"clared intent of the oath to be to preserve the act inviolable, on "which the security of the church of England depends, I was surprised "and astonished; and, upon the shocking discovery, my heart was "turned to loath that oath which I had before scrupled."* He also relates, that, after this, he took the aforesaid act, along with him, to a meeting of synod; and when he produced it there, the members seemed to be struck with it. But Mr. James Ramsay of Kelso, a man of great influence in the judicatories, answered by distinguishing between the church of England as a protestant church, and as a church having such a government and worship; and admitting the intent of the oath in the first sense, but not in the second. "This," says Mr. Boston, "was truly stumbling to me, and served to confirm me against "the oath. I plainly saw, that some were resolute to answer, when "it seemed to me, they hardly knew what to answer."

Alex. Mr. Willison tells us, that the most strict and zealous ministers in Scotland, were brought to declare, both from the pulpit, and press, that the embracing or refusing the oath of abjuration did not afford the least ground for separation.

Ruf. We do not find the associate presbytery saying, that this evil alone was a sufficient ground for separation. But they acknowledge it to be a moral evil, involving the nation in guilt, particularly, in that of covenant-breaking; and judge, that it is one ground of deep humiliation before the Lord. And is it not to be lamented, that they, whose office it is, to show the Lord's people their transgressions, should be employed in covering sin, with such frivolous excuses, as those which Mr. Willison tells us, were used by such as attempted to justify the swearing of this insnaring oath.

§ 22. *Alex.* The oath of abjuration brings to my mind the form of swearing by laying the hand upon and kissing the gospels. The arti-

* Memoirs of Mr. Boston, page 274 and 275.

cle concerning this matter in the testimony of the associate presbytery, some think, might have been omitted; as it was not among the evils, about which they had to deal with the judicatories of the church.

Ruf. The associate presbytery speaking of the consequences of the incorporating union between Scotland and England, observe, that this superstitious form of swearing was then introduced into Scotland; which is a very corrupt innovation in that part of Divine worship. It is contrary to the scripture pattern, which ought alone to direct us, as in every other part, so in this solemn act of worship. *Abraham said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take any thing which is thine.** The uncreated angel of the covenant, is represented by Daniel and John as *lifting up his hand to heaven, and swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever.*†

When God, speaking of himself after the manner of men, represents himself as swearing, he expresses it by saying, that he had lifted up his hand; a phrase which is used, six times, in this sense, in the 20th chapter of Ezekiel.‡

The moral worship of God, to which swearing by his name belongs, ought to be performed in such a manner as is conformable to the examples of it recorded in scripture.

Alex. This is not the only form of swearing mentioned in scripture. Putting the hand under the thigh of the administrator was the manner in which Abraham made his servant Eliezer swear to him concerning the affair of taking a wife for his son Isaac, and in which Jacob made Joseph swear to bury him in Canaan.

Ruf. The act of putting the hand under the thigh of the administrator is far from being of the same consideration in this matter with the form of lifting up the hand. The former does not appear to have been used, like the latter, as a sign of the appeal made to God in an oath. Lifting up the hand, as was just now mentioned, is, in scripture phraseology, put for swearing. Exod. vi. 8, *I will bring you into the land concerning which I did swear*, in the Heb. *I lifted up my hand:* so the same phrase is rendered in Numb. xiv. 30: But the expression, *Putting the hand under the thigh* of another man is never used to signify swearing in the scripture; nor as far as I have heard in the language of any nation in the world. Judicious commentators think, that, in the instances to which you refer, putting the hand under the thigh is to be considered as a token of homage or subjection, or of a belief that Abraham and Jacob had of the Messiah, who was to descend from

* Gen xiv. 22. † Dan. xii. 7. Revel. x. 5, 6.

‡ Archbishop Tillotson, in his sermon on Heb. vi. 16, says, that, as to the form of swearing by lifting up the hand, "there is not the least intimation in scripture, that it was prescribed and appointed by God, but voluntarily instituted and taken up by men." But, surely, in other cases, an approved example of an usage in the worship of God, when it is neither singular nor disagreeable to what is taught in any other part of scripture, is justly considered as an intimation of God's appointment of that usage. So Abel's offering of sacrifice being acceptable to God, was in intimation, that God had appointed that rite after the fall. So the examples recorded in scripture of the assembling of christians on the first day of the week for the hearing of the word preached and for the celebration of the Lord's supper, are an intimation that God had appointed that day to be the christian sabbath. In like manner, the uniform use of *lifting up the hand*, in the examples recorded in scripture, intimates, that God appointed this gesture to be used in swearing. As to putting the hand under the thigh, it is shewn to be no exception.

them according to the flesh; the posterity of the patriarchs being described as coming out of the thigh, Gen. xlvi. 26, *The souls that came out of Jacob's loins;* in the Heb. *out of his thigh.* Judg. viii. 30, *Gideon had seventy sons of his body begotten;* in Heb. *going out of his thigh.* Nor do I know any just exception to the opinion suggested by a late ingenious writer, Mr. Harmer, who thinks, that Abraham's servant might swear with one hand under his master's thigh, and the other stretched out to heaven.

Alex. Swearing being an ordinance not peculiar to the church, but common to mankind, is to be performed by every one in such a form as is authorized by the law or usage of his country. It is the solemn appeal to God; it is engaging to speak the truth, and calling upon him to witness our sincerity, that constitute the oath and obligation. If this be done, it is immaterial, whether any, or what form be used.

Ruf. As swearing is an act of natural worship, not peculiar to the church, but common to mankind; so is lifting up the hand a natural sign of that worship. Men are naturally led to use this gesture to signify, that the God by whom we swear, dwells in heaven, from whence he beholds the children of men, that he may render to every one according to his works.* This impression seems to have led the heathens to use this gesture both in prayer and in swearing. Thus when Virgil's hero addresses the gods, he lifts up his hands to heaven:

> Tendens ad sidera palmas.

So does Latinus in the act of swearing:

> Suspiciens cœlum, tendit ad sidera dextram,
> Hæc eadem, Æneas, terram, mare, sidera, juro.†

Hence I could never see, that the civil establishment of this form of swearing (as in Scotland) could be justly considered as an imposition on the conscience of any; because it is not a right of any arbitrary institution: it is no peculiarity of any religious society; but a natural sign which conscience leads men to use in expressing their regard to the Deity. It is the language not of any human convention, but of *nature.* Neither heathen nor Mahomedan could object to it as contrary to their religious opinions.

With regard to such as bear the christian name, their opposition to it is most absurd, while it is both agreeable to the light of nature, and recommended by the approved examples of scripture.

It is true, that inconsideration and the violence of party spirit have led some to such an absurdity as to reject what is abundantly authorized by the light of nature and the consent of mankind in all ages. Thus some have denied, that there ought to be any use of oaths, or even of the magistrate's office. Such opinions are not to be countenanced, but censured by those appointed to be guardians of the welfare of civil society.

* Psalm xxxiii. 13, 14. Prov. xxiv. 12.

† Latinus upward turned his suppliant eyes,
And his right hand uplifted to the skies:
What thou hast sworn, I too, Eneas, swear
By earth, by sea, by every starry sphere,
Æneid, Lib. xii.

It cannot be pretended, that any other gesture would be better adapted to the design of an oath, which is, that of ascertaining the truth by the testimony of the person sworn, than that of lifting up the hand. It is true, that an appeal to God, engaging to speak the truth, and calling upon him to attest our sincerity, constitute the oath and obligation; yet when the oath is formally administered to a person, and some gesture must be used, it becomes the person's duty, both in opposition to such a careless deportment as would be unbecoming in any act of solemn religious worship, and also in opposition to superstitious ceremonies, to use the gesture approved by the light of nature and recommended by scripture example: the designed deliberate neglect of which, in this act of worship, cannot be free from a contempt of the Divine will and authority.

It may be farther observed, that the mode of swearing by laying the hand upon, and kissing, the Bible, or that part of it called the gospels, is both superstitious, and, in some respects, idolatrous. It cannot be pretended to have any warrant in scripture, or to be any other than a human invention, an arbitrary rite; and therefore the use of it as a way or means of Divine worship, is, according to our confession of faith, superstitious: for God is not to be worshipped in any other way, or by any other means, than those appointed in his word. Kissing is a rite which was never used in the worship of the true God; but frequently in that of idols; such as, the calves which Jeroboam set up in Dan and Bethel. Hence it was said of their worshippers, *Let the men, that sacrifice, kiss the calves*, Hosea xiii. 2. It was used in the worship of Baal. Hence God said to Elijah, *I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that hath not kissed him.* From these texts it appears, that kissing was used as a rite of religious worship as well as bowing; and the one, externally directed to an idol, was idolatry, as well as the other. Hence it is evident, that kissing the Bible is a symbolizing with an idolatrous form of worship contrary to the Divine prohibition, Deut. xii. 10. *Enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.* Nay, I fear, we cannot vindicate this practice from the charge of idolatry; for in this form of swearing the book is exhibited, not only to ascertain the person sworn, but to be regarded as a sacred object; to which the external act of kissing (which, according to the texts just now quoted, is an external expression of religious worship, as well as bowing,) is directed. The Bible is, indeed, holy; but it is no more an object of religious worship on that account, than the saints and angels on account of their holiness. The Bible teaches us to direct our religious worship, not to itself, but to its Divine Author alone.

Alex. But, in this case, neither the administrator, nor he who swears, has any intention of worshipping the Bible.

Ruf. Heathens and Papists have alleged, that, in bowing before their images and kissing them, they intended to worship God through the medium of the images. But whatever be the intention of the worshipper, his act of religious worship is idolatrous, if it be externally directed to an image, book, or any creature whatever. When the Israelites worshipped the calves of Dan and Bethel, though they professed to worship Jehovah, the true God, yet they were charged with

idolatry; because they externally worshipped or bowed down to the calves which had been set up for that purpose. And is there not the same reason to charge those, who use the form of swearing by kissing a book, with that crime? Has the act of kissing, (which in this case is an expression of worship,) any other object than a certain book which is brought forward for that purpose?

Many others in the reformed churches have borne testimony against this form of swearing, as well as the Seceders. It is, undoubtedly, contrary to the principles and practice of the church of Scotland. In the national synod of the reformed churches of France which was held at Gap in the year 1613, when it was moved, "Whether an oath might "be lawfully taken before the magistrate by laying the hands on and "kissing the Bible? The assembly judging that ceremony to be of "dangerous consequence, declared, that it ought not to be used, but "that whoso are called out to swear, shall content themselves with the "bare lifting up of their hands." Mr. Mather in his History of New-England, says, these famous divines, Rivet, Pareus and Voetius wrote against the book-oath; that Dr. Goodwin and Mr. Nye reckoned it the worst of the English ceremonies; that the blessed martyr William Thorp refused it, saying, *If I touch the book, the meaning of that ceremony is nothing else but that I swear by it.* The same author informs us, that multitudes of pious and sober men in New-England, scrupling this mode of swearing, have been put from serving upon juries, and many of them most unaccountably fined and imprisoned; thus suffering persecution for bearing testimony to the purity of Divine worship in that important part of it, an oath. Mr. Mather represents these confessors as saying in defence of their conduct, "All religious "worship, not commanded by God, is forbidden; all symbolical cere-"monies enjoined on men in religious worship are made parts of it; "our swearing on the gospels is a swearing by the gospel; and there-"fore idolatrous, as is evident from the interpretation of the canon "law, and the common law. Nor has a particular magistrate power "to put any other interpretation on the law."

Alex. In my opinion, these good people mistook the matter, as well as the Seceders. The ceremony of kissing the book is not the oath, but only the sign of it.

Ruf. I hope, Sir, you will be so candid as to hear these people a little farther. "This mode," added they, "is naturally and necessa-"rily, as well as originally, a swearing by the gospel; for otherwise, "were it a sign only, it would signify no more than the presence and "consent of the person that swears. But this pretence is superseded "by the form of the oath of supremacy, which, as it is prescribed in our "statute law, concludes with these words, *By the contents of this book.* "Besides, if the book is used for no other end than to signify that a "person is sworn, why should the Bible be used rather than any other "book? The touching of a table may signify this, as much as the "touching of the Bible. The Bible is a sacred thing; and to put it to "a mere civil use is a profane abuse of it." On this point I shall read an observation of Mr. Gellatly, which deserves our attention. "The "act of laying the hand on and kissing the book," says he, "is of an "ordained mystical signification, being appointed to signify the per-"son's appeal to God as witnessing to the truth, or as Judge and

"Avenger in case of perjury, there being no other appeal to him in "the oath, nor mention made in it of his sacred name, except in the "prayer at the close, *so help me God;* which may with reverence be "used in setting about any other lawful action, as well as that of "swearing. So that if an appeal to God be not made in laying the "hand on and kissing the book, there is no appeal to him; and, con-"sequently, no oath at all. Thus the form of swearing by God is laid "aside; which is expressly enjoined in scripture, Deut. vi. 13, *Thou "shalt swear by his name:* it is exemplified by the saints in scripture, "Nehem. xiii. 25, *I made them swear by God:* yea, we have his own "imitable example, Heb. vi. 13, *Because he could swear by no greater, "he swore by himself.* It is matter of lamentation, that the touching "and kissing the book, should be put in the room of that fearful and "glorious name in the matter of an oath. If this be not a leaving of "God's way, and choosing the devices of men in a matter of Divine "worship, I know not what may be reckoned a doing so."

Alex. It has been observed, that persons should be allowed to use such a form of swearing as is most adapted to impress their minds with the weight and solemnity of an oath, and with the danger of perjury.

Ruf. Many can see little solemnity in the kissing of a book, and are apprehensive, that it leads ignorant and thoughtless people, who regard it as a mere insignificant ceremony, to swallow oaths with the greatest indifference. Some pretend to experience great reverence and awe, when they lay their hand upon and kiss the Bible. But it is not rational, as Mr. Gellatly observes, to suppose, that a book, or any thing else, will be of much weight in this matter with any, who have not an awe of the name of God upon their spirits. And how ridiculous is it for persons to stand more in awe of the book, than of the *name* of God, which gives the book all the sacredness for which it is revered! Besides, if an oath is to be administered to each person in the form which he may pretend, strikes him with the greatest awe; then Papists must be sworn by the cross; Mahometans, by the *Koran;* some infidels, by the stars; some atheistical worldlings, by their *belly;* and some who deal in charms and magical arts, by the *devil.* The form of swearing will be reduced to the most absurd uncertainty and fluctuation. In fine, the reverence of an oath must be greatly diminished, if not annihilated, in those who have no concern to observe the form which both reason and revelation recommend as the most proper.

Alex. Supposing a person could bear witness against a murderer in a country where kissing the book is the established form of swearing, if he refused to comply with this mode, he would not be permitted to give his testimony; and, for want of it, the murderer might escape. In such a case, if he should comply with the established form of swearing for the public good, would not the guilt lie on the rigorous imposers, not on him?

Ruf. I see no reasonable objection to Mr. Gellatly's solution of this case. The precepts, says he, of the Divine law are so linked together in one beautiful chain, that one of them does not oppose another. He that requires men to testify the truth, when they are called to appear as witnesses in a court of justice, requires them to observe the way of worshipping him appointed in his word; and if they be desired to ob-

serve the one precept in the way of violating the other, they may justly refuse; since the authority of God is stamped on every precept; and the least evil is not to be done that the greatest good may follow, Rom. iii. 8. The guilt of rulers, in commanding their people to use this unwarrantable mode of swearing, is very great. But neither are they free from sin, who comply with their unlawful commands, in this or any other matter. In such a case, we are to adhere steadily to this maxim, *That we are to obey God rather than man.**

On the whole, I cannot help wondering, how pious people, who profess to take their religion from the Bible, should affect to overlook or despise the reasoning of the Seceders on this head, and continue to defend or excuse so great an absurdity in the form of administering and taking an oath.

§ 23. *Alex.* In pursuing this subject, we have digressed too long from our design of reviewing Mr. Willison's objections against the Judicial Testimony of the associate presbytery. Let us now proceed to consider his objection against the account given in that Testimony of the general assembly's proceedings in the cases of Mr. Simson and Mr. Campbell. These men were allowed to be both eminent for their talents. I would be glad, Rufus, to hear you state concisely the errors with which they were charged, and the opposite doctrines maintained by the associate presbytery.

Ruf. I shall first state the errors with which Mr. John Simson, professor of divinity in the university of Glasgow, was charged in the process carried on against him in the years 1714, 1715 and 1716.

1. Mr. Simson taught, that, by the *light* of nature and the *works* of creation and providence, *including tradition*, heathens have an implicit and obscure revelation of the gospel; by which revelation they may know, that there is a remedy for sin provided; and that they would have the benefit of this remedy, if they did not slight and reject the obscure discovery and offer of grace made to all without the church.

In opposition to this opinion the associate presbytery assert, that the *light* of nature is not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will, which is necessary to salvation: and that, therefore, they, who do not profess the christian religion, cannot be saved; however diligent they may be to frame their lives according to the *light* of nature, and the *law* of that religion which they profess, Ephes. ii. 12. 1 Cor. i. 21. Confession of Faith, chap. i. § 1.

2. Mr. Simson asserted, that there were means appointed of God for obtaining saving grace; which means, when diligently used with seriousness, sincerity and faith of being heard, God hath promised to bless with success; and that the going about these means in the foresaid manner is not above the reach of our natural ability or power.

On the contrary, the associate presbytery assert, that man by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; and that, in his natural state, being enmity against God and averse from all spiritual good, is not able by his own strength to convert himself or prepare himself thereto; and consequently, that there is no necessary nor certain connection, either in the nature of things or by the Divine promise, between the morally

* Acts iv. 29.

serious endeavours of man in a natural state and the obtaining of spiritual or saving grace.

Notwithstanding this, they assert, that it is the duty of all and every one to attend diligently on Divine ordinances, particularly on the reading and hearing of the word and on prayer; these being the ordinary means by which converting and quickening grace is communicated to such as are dead in sins. Rom. iii. 10, 12. Ephes. ii. 1. John v. 44. Confess. chap. ix. § 3.

3. Mr. Simson maintained, that there was no proper covenant made with Adam, and that he was not a federal head to his posterity. He also maintained, that the souls of infants, since the fall, as they come from the hands of their Creator, are as pure and holy, as they would have been created, supposing, that man had not fallen; and that it is more than probable, that baptized infants, dying in infancy, are all saved; and that, if God should deny his sovereign grace to any of the children of infidels, he would deal more severely with them, than he did with the fallen angels.

On the contrary, the associate presbytery assert, that, when God created man, he entered into a covenant with him; wherein life was promised upon condition of perfect and personal obedience; that, in this covenant, the first Adam stood in the capacity of a covenant head and representative to all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation; that, by reason of his breach of this covenant, they all sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression; that his sin is truly and justly imputed to every one of them; and that all infants, descending from Adam by ordinary generation, on account of his sin imputed to them, want that original righteousness wherewith Adam was created; and are by nature children of wrath. Rom. v. 12, 18, 19. 1 Corinth. xv. 22, 45, 49. Psal. li. 5. Confess. chap. vi. § 3, 5, 6.

4. Mr. Simson impugned the immediate previous Divine concourse with all the actions of the reasonable creature; and in place of the usual doctrine of our reformed divines, affirmed, that God may determine infallibly all the actions of reasonable creatures that are not above their natural powers, nor contrary to their natural inclinations and dispositions, by placing them in such circumstances, by which they have a certain train of motives laid before them, by which they may infallibly, yet freely, produce such a series of actions, as he has determined.

But the associate presbytery assert, that, though some of the ordinary terms, that are used by our reformed divines on this subject, are not in our confession of faith; yet the doctrine of the immediate previous concourse of God with all the actions of the reasonable creature, as it is explained by these divines, is plainly held forth therein from the word of God in these words: "The Almighty power, unsearchable "wisdom and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in "his Providence, that it extendeth itself to the first fall and all other "sins of angels and men, and that, not by a bare permission; but such "as has joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and other-"wise ordering and governing them, in a manifold dispensation, to his "own holy ends. Yet so that the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only

"from the creature and not from God, who, being most holy and "righteous, neither is, nor can be the author or approver of sin."*

5. Mr. Simson maintained, that a regard to our own happiness, or the prospect of eternal blessedness in the enjoyment of God in heaven, ought to be our chief motive in serving the Lord on earth; and that our glorifying God being the means, is subordinate to our enjoyment of him for ever; which, said he, is our ultimate end.

But the associate presbytery assert, that the principal motive of true love to God is not our own happiness or self-interest, but the glorious perfections of his nature, as they are manifested in *Immanuel* God with us; and that the instinct of the new nature with which the Lord endues all his people in regeneration, makes them, by the farther influence of grace, desire to serve God for himself and his supereminent excellencies, and not merely, or chiefly, for the prospect of their own happiness. 1 Cor. x. 31. Isai. xlii. 8. Hence our glorifying God as our chief end is put before our enjoyment of him in the answer to the first question in our catechisms.

6. Mr. Simson maintained, that there will be no sinning *in hell* after the last judgement.

The associate presbytery, on the contrary, assert, that sin is the rational creature's want of conformity to the law of God; and that, therefore, as the natures of the damned in hell were never renewed, they can never cease from sinning, while they can have no manner of conformity to the law of God; and, while from their corrupt natures must necessarily flow the highest enmity against the justice and holiness of God in punishing them; which is expressed in the scripture by *gnashing of teeth:* so that both sinning and suffering will be their misery through eternity. Larg. Cat. quest. 24 and 152.

7. The errors which I have now mentioned were those with which Mr. Simson was charged in the first process against him. But in another process, which was begun in the year 1726, and concluded in the year 1729, it was found, that he had taught other gross and dangerous errors: such as, That our Lord Jesus Christ is not necessarily existent; that the term *necessary existence* is impertinent in speaking of the Trinity; that it is not to be said, that the three persons of the Trinity are *numerically one* in substance or essence; that the terms *necessary existence*, *Supreme Deity*, and the title of *the only true God*, may be taken in a sense, that includes the personal property of the Father, and so do not belong to the Son.

On the contrary, the associate presbytery assert, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, by ineffable, incomprehensible and

* Confess. chap. v. sect. 4. The doctrine of our reformed divines, is, That the rational creature is to be considered as an efficient cause of its own actions; and that yet, being a second cause, it acts dependently on the *First Cause;* each of these causes producing the same action as a total cause in its own order. This appears from such places of scripture as teach, that God not only gives and preserves the power of acting, but concurs with the creature by an immediate, previous, predetermining influence, to the production of the action; the creature being represented as not only existing or being, but as moving in or by God, Acts xvii. 28. As, in its free actions, moved and actuated by God, as tools in the hand of a workman, Isai. x. 15. This doctrine appears from the necessary, absolute dependence of the creature on God in acting as well as in existing. God is the Author of all real being, and consequently of whatever real being is in the actions of reasonable creatures: but he neither is nor can be the Author of the sinfulness of their actions; which sinfulness, being a privation or want of conformity to the law of God, is imputable to the rational creature only, as necessarily under the obligation of that law.

necessary generation, is Jehovah the most high God, self-existent, and independent; that he is necessarily existent; that the terms *necessary existence, Supreme Deity*, and the title of *the only true God*, cannot be taken in a sense that includes the personal property of the Father; but belong to the Son and Holy Spirit equally with the Father; and that the three persons of the adorable Trinity are *numerically one* in substance or essence, equal in power and glory. John i. 1, 2, 3—x. 30. 1 John v. 20. Rom. ix. 5. Revel. i. 8. Confess. chap. viii. 2. Larg. Cat. quest. 9.

8. Mr. Simson maintained, that reason, as it is taken for evident propositions naturally revealed, is the principle or foundation of Theology; and that nothing is to be admitted in religion, but what is agreeable to reason, and determined by reason to be so.

The associate presbytery consider these assertions as exalting reason above Divine revelation; and as contrary to the answer to the second question of the shorter catechism, and to the doctrine of our confession, namely, that the Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of eminent writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest; can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures.* The associate presbytery account these tenets, concerning man's reason, the very spring of the other dangerous errors vented and taught by him. "Mr. "Simson," say they, "having once set reason in the chair, and exalted "it to be *judge* in principles of faith, it is no wonder, that he rejected "the testimony of God, in his own word, concerning the covenant "headship and representation of the first Adam, and the many sacred "truths connected with that article; and that he maintained the other "errors with which he was charged in the first process. Hence, too, "he was led, at length, to deny the Supreme Deity and necessary "existence of him, whose name is the Wonderful Counsellor, the "Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

I may now give you some account of the opinions against which the associate presbytery bear testimony, as having been maintained and taught by Archibald Campbell, Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of St. Andrews, in his publications, and in the process against him before the general assembly in 1736.

1. In his Enquiry into the original of moral virtue, he asserted, that God's interests are not in all respects independent on us; and that virtue does not depend on the arbitrary will of any being, but flows from the essential properties and nature of things.

The associate presbytery assert, on the contrary, That God has all life, glory, goodness in and of himself; that he is alone in and to himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures, nor deriving any glory from them; but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto and upon them; that he has sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth; that any rewards that he has promised to any of his creatures, are free and voluntary; that, in all their obedience, worship and service, they can neither profit him, nor be any way advantageous to him; that God himself, in the wise purposes and counsel of his will, laid down the

* Confess. chap. i. § 10.

whole plan of the nature and relation of things, which he freely brings forth in his works of creation, providence and redemption; that, though the precepts of the moral law be eternal and immutable, the holiness of his nature being such, that it cannot be his will that his creatures should do otherwise: yet, the scriptures also assert, that God is our Lawgiver; that he has an absolute sovereignty and authority over us; and, consequently, that nothing can be a law to us but by his enacting it; and that what he enacts must be a law to us, whether it be a moral precept, or a thing in its own nature indifferent; as is evident, from the positive precept given to Adam at his creation, and from other positive commands, both under the Old and New Testaments.*

2. Mr. Campbell also affirmed, that self-interest or pleasure is the only standard by which we can judge of the virtue, that is, the value or goodness, of any action whatsoever; that virtue and utility are two words signifying the same thing; that the intrinsic goodness or rectitude of moral virtue, lies directly in the fitness of it to the self-love and happiness of mankind; and that actions are virtuous as they promote self-interest.

The associate presbytery, on the contrary, maintain, that the law or revealed will of God is the adequate and only standard by which the goodness of actions is to be tried. They teach, that the moral goodness of our actions consists in their being done from a respect to the authority of God the Lawgiver, and by faith in Christ; and that nothing is more contradictory to the whole word of God, than to assert that the goodness of our love to God and his Son Jesus Christ, or of any act of obedience, consists directly in its fitness to promote our personal interest. Isai. viii. 20. Psal. cxix. 4, 5, 9. 1 Sam. xv. 22. 1 John iii. 4. Psal. xl. 8. John xv. 4, 5. Confess. chap. i. § 2—chap. xvi. § 1, 2.

3. Mr. Campbell taught, as Mr. Simson had done, that the sole and universal motive to virtuous actions is self-love, interest or pleasure; that self-love is the first spring in every rational mind, that awakens her powers, begins her motions, and carries her on to action; and that self-love, as it exerts itself in the desire of universal, unlimited esteem, is the commanding motive that determines us to the pursuit of virtue.

These positions, the associate presbytery condemn, as directly contrary to the word of God: which teaches, that all our religious actions must proceed from a new nature, and from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and from a holy regard and love to God; and not from self-love or self-interest, as their first spring or principle;† and that our chief or ultimate end ought not to be the advancement of our self-interest, but the advancement of God's declarative glory. Our Lord Jesus, whose example we are to imitate, *pleased not himself*, sought

* Although, says the associate presbytery, these positive commands were all wise and good, yet who can say, that God was necessarily obliged by his own nature to enact them; or that he could not possibly have done otherwise? It is therefore grossly erroneous to set up the nature and relation of things as a law above God himself; and to maintain that moral good and evil flow from the essential properties and nature of things; or, that moral good and evil do not flow only from the holiness of God's nature, together with his sovereign authority and will manifested in his law.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. John xv. 4, 5. Math. xxii. 37, 39.

not *his own will or glory*, but the will and glory of the Father who sent him. To be lovers of our own selves, that is, to love ourselves inordinately, is one of the blackest crimes.* It is manifestly an inordinate self-love, to make our self-interest or happiness the chief motive of our love to God; to love him not for himself, but for ourselves. This is to prefer ourselves to our Maker, and to love ourselves more than the Creator! That obedience to God which is principally influenced by self-interest is legal, mercenary and servile, or such as men in their natural state may attain. The opinion which makes self-love or regard to our own interest the principal motive to virtuous actions, has a direct tendency to destroy the specific difference between common and saving grace; an error of the Arminians, of Mr. Baxter and others.

It is true, the chief end of God, in all his works, is his declarative glory: for *the Lord hath made all things for himself*.† But Mr. Campbell argued most absurdly and impiously, that in acting from self-interest, we imitate God. This was just the aim of Satan's first temptation, *Ye shall be as gods*.‡ So that this scheme teaches men to exalt themselves to an equality with God.

4. Mr. Campbell, in his discourse proving, that the apostles were no enthusiasts, affirms, that "many in the world look upon those manifestations which, they think, they have of the nature and excellencies of God, as supernaturally communicated to their minds; and take those inward ravishments they feel, upon such pretended revelations, to be all Divine joys poured in upon them by the immediate hand of God himself; that all such events," making no exception of any, but such as are of the extraordinary and miraculous kind, "may possibly have come about in a natural course and series of things, without any more interposing of the Divinity than there is, when a man opens his eyes and beholds the Sun in its glory at noon; and that an extravagant conceit of being peculiarly blessed with such supernatural communications from Heaven, makes up the very life and soul of enthusiasm." Making human reason, in its present state, the only guide to our devotions, Mr. Campbell describes the enthusiast to be one "who, in the course of his devotion, keeps not within the compass of reason, consulting the throne of grace, laying his matters before the Lord, and imploring his light and direction. These, and like expressions," says he, "*are terms of art* much used by enthusiasts."

On the contrary, the associate presbytery declare and assert, that the holy scriptures teach the absolute necessity of a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, for the renovation of our natures, and for manifesting to us in a saving manner, the glorious excellencies of God in the person of Jesus Christ; that, according to the scriptures, this work of the Spirit is common to all that are effectually called, every one of them being peculiarly blessed with it;‖ that the will of God revealed in his word, and not our own depraved reason, is that rule, within the

* Rom. xv. 1, 3. John v. 30—vii. 18. 2 Tim. iii. 2. † Prov. xvi. 4.

‡ Gen. iii. 5. We are to imitate God, by having that for our chief end which is his end in all his works, namely, the Divine glory.

‖ 2 Corinth. iv. 6—v. 17. Ephes. i. 18, 19. Confess. chap. x. § 1.

compass of which we are to keep in our devotion;* that, according to the scriptures, an actual influence of the Holy Spirit is necessary to impress the truths of God upon our mind, and to enable us to walk with God in all the duties of holy obedience;† that it is our duty, not to lean on our own understanding or reason, but to consult the throne of grace, to lay all our matters before the Lord, and to implore his light and direction.‡

5. Mr. Campbell, in his writings, likewise affirmed that men, without revelation, cannot by their natural powers find out, that there is a God.

The associate presbytery, on the contrary, assert, that the light of nature and the works of creation and providence, without the aid of tradition or revelation, shew, that there is a God; who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; as also, that thereby his wisdom, power and goodness are so far manifested, that all men are left inexcusable: and they reject and condemn all contrary principles, as having a tendency to darken and render doubtful the truth of natural religion.‖

6. Mr. Campbell, in his writings asserted, that the laws of nature, in themselves, are a certain and sufficient rule to direct rational minds to happiness; and that our observation of these laws is the great mean or instrument of our real and lasting felicity.

On the contrary, the associate presbytery assert, that the word of God is the only rule of faith and obedience; that men cannot be accepted in God's sight, nor be entitled to future and lasting felicity, by framing their lives according to the law of nature; and that, though holiness be absolutely necessary to make us meet for communion with God, both in grace here and in glory hereafter; yet, it is the righteousness of Christ or his obedience and satisfaction imputed to us and received by faith of God's operation, that is the great conditional mean of our blessedness begun in time and consummated in heaven.§

7. Mr. Campbell, in his writings, taught, that the apostles do not seem to have had any notion of our Saviour's Divinity, at the time of his crucifixion; that the apostles being violently possessed in favour of a worldly kingdom, expected this and this *only* from him; that the apostles, in the interval between Christ's death and his resurrection, were greatly offended at him in their hearts, as being, in their opinion, a downright cheat and deceiver, who had once flattered them with mighty hopes, but now had left them in all the agonies of shame and disappointment; and that they did not apprehend him under that character in which he is represented to us by the apostle John, in the first chapter of his gospel, and by Paul, in his epistles, before they began their public ministry.

* Isai. viii. 20. Confess. chap. i. § 1, 2—xvi. § 1.

† Rom. viii. 9, 26. Philip. ii. 13. John xvi. 7, 8, 9, 14. Confess. chap. xvi. § 1, 3, 5, 7.

‡ Prov. iii. 5, 6. Philip. iv. 6. Heb. iv. 16.

‖ Rom. i. 19, 20, 32—ii. 12, 14, 15. Confess. chap. xxi. § 1, and chap i. 1.

§ Gal. iii. 21, 22. Acts x. 43—xvi. 31. Rom. iii. 22 to 28. Philip. iii. 7, 8, 9. Confess. chap. vii. § 3—x. § 4—xi. § 1.

On the contrary, the associate presbytery assert, that all such, as have saving faith, believe in the Lord Jesus as the Christ the Son of God; and that the apostles and disciples of our Lord, in the days of his humiliation, acknowledged, believed in, and worshipped their Lord and Master as the true promised Messiah, the Son of the living God, the only begotten of the Father; and expected from him spiritual and eternal life and salvation; that none who have truly believed in the Lord Jesus can fall away, either totally or finally, from a state of grace; that the faith of the apostles and disciples of our Lord did not fail in the interval of time between his death and resurrection; and that, therefore, whatever clouds and doubts they were under, they never were so far left to themselves, as to conclude, that their Lord and Master was a downright deceiver and impostor. And they reject and condemn the contrary assertions of Mr. Campbell.*

§ 24. *Alex.* Mr. Willison charges the associate presbytery with falsehood, in representing the general assembly as having dismissed professor Simson, without any censure or express testimony against his errors.

Ruf. I have already intimated, that there were two processes against Mr. Simson for error: one, which was issued in the year 1717, and another, in the year 1729. Now Mr. Willison ought to have observed, that this expression of the associate presbytery, in their acknowledgment of sins, "*That the general assembly dismissed the process without any censure,*" regards the former process only; and that a distinct article follows in that acknowledgment with respect to the latter.

Concerning the first process, the associate presbytery say, in the Judicial Testimony, the assembly, instead of condemning particularly the errors owned by Mr. Simson, and inflicting due censure upon him, did not so much as rebuke him. This being the fact, the presbytery might justly say, as they do in their acknowledgment of sins, that the first process was dismissed without any censure inflicted upon Mr. Simson; yea, without any particular express testimony against his gross and dangerous errors. Mr. Willison himself laments the way in which this process in the year 1717 was issued by the assembly, and owns that, "as a just rebuke upon the assembly for their "lenity, Mr. Simson persisted in his unsound doctrine." "Would "to God," says he, in another place, "that our assembly had given "plain and faithful warning against professor Simson's and professor "Campbell's errors."†

Alex. Mr. Willison finds fault with the associate presbytery, because they might have contented themselves with saying, (as he himself has said,) that the assembly's censure of Mr. Simson was too lenient, and that their warning against these errors was not sufficiently plain and faithful. Is not the fault of the assembly in this matter, exaggerated by the associate presbytery?

Ruf. In order to do justice to this article of the associate presbytery's representation, it is necessary to attend to the act of the general

* John i. 14. Matth. xvi. 16, 17. John vi. 68, 69—xiv. 1—xx. 28—xxi. 17. Confess. chap. viii. § 2, 6—xvii. § 1—xxv. § 4, 5.

† Impartial Testimony, pages 88 and 154.

assembly in the year 1717, in which the first process against Mr. Simson was issued, and which runs in the following terms. "Therefore, "although professor Simson does declare his adherence to our con- "fession of faith and the doctrine contained therein as his judge- "ment, and disowns the errors opposite thereto, wherewith he was "charged; yet considering that by his printed answers he hath given "offence; and that it is judged, that therein he has vented some "opinions not necessary to be taught in Divinity;—and for answering "more satisfyingly (as he supposes) the cavils and objections of ad- "versaries, he hath adopted some hypothesis different from what are "commonly used among orthodox divines, that are not evidently "founded on the scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural "reason and the power of corrupt nature; therefore, they prohibit "and discharge the said Mr. Simson to use such expressions, or to "teach, preach, or otherwise vent, such opinions, propositions, or hy- "pothesis as the foresaid."

Now, to use the words of a judicious writer,* "What has the as- "sembly said in this act? They have even said, that it is judged, "that Mr. Simson has done so and so: and no doubt some, yea many "did judge, that Mr. Simson had vented himself in the above-men- "tioned manner; but the assembly have never said, that *they them- "selves* had either judged or found, that by the opinions which he was "proved to have taught, the truths of God, plainly held forth from his "word in our confession of faith, were subverted." Nay, this was so far from being the case, that in the year 1729, when the assembly's committee exhibited a libel against Mr. Simson for continuing to teach the same gross errors, he pleaded in his own defence, "That the pro- "positions contained in the said libels, and which were taken out of "his own printed defences, were none of them found by the assembly "in 1717, to be contrary to the word of God, and our confession of "faith."†

If Mr Simson had ground for this plea, (and it seems to have been admitted that he had, since no farther notice was taken of the committee's libel,) how could the assembly be said to have censured him, or expressly testified against his errors?

With regard to the second process against Mr. Simson, for teaching that the title of the *Most High God* is not applicable to the *Son* in the *same sense* in which it is given to the *Father*, and for denying that the three persons of the adorable Trinity are numerically one in substance or essence; it was not dismissed altogether without censure. But the associate presbytery lament, that the censure inflicted, which was suspension from teaching and preaching, was no way adequate to the offence he had given by such gross blasphemy. With regard to both the first and second process, against Mr. Simson, the associate presbytery consider it as a ground of mourning, that the assembly gave no particular and express testimony to the truth, in terms directly opposite to those in which he expressed his pernicious errors. And they insist, that the reason which was given for this omission in open court, namely, that they were not to add new articles to our

* Mr. Wilson's Continuation of his Defence, pages 381 and 382

† Ibid. chap. iii. sect. 1, page 382.

confession of faith, made the matter worse; as it implied that, in the assembly's judgement, the truth directly opposite to Mr. Simson's erroneous propositions is not contained in the confession. For, there could be no adding to the confession by a particular and express declaration of what is contained in it.* And if the judicatories of the church of Scotland, or that church, as represented by her judicatories, allowed, that the several Divine truths directly opposite to Mr. Simson's errors, were not contained in that confession; then, her professed adherence to that confession *ceased to be any sufficient evidence of her soundness in the faith* with regard to these truths. Here, I suppose, it is understood, that by an express and particular testimony against Mr. Simson's pernicious errors, the associate presbytery meant the assembly's finding and declaring these erroneous propositions, as they stood in Mr. Simson's defences, to be contrary to the word of God and the confession of faith. If this was not done by the assembly, there was not, in the sense of the associate presbytery, any express or particular testimony given against these errors. But Mr. Willison himself does not pretend, that this was done in the second process against Mr. Simson; and much less in the first.

Alex. I should think that the assembly's disapprobation of the expressions, alleged in the first process, to have been used by Mr. Simson, and their discharging him to use them afterwards, may be considered as some degree of censure; and therefore, the associate presbytery exaggerates the lenity of the assembly too much, in saying, that the process was dismissed without any censure inflicted on him.

Ruf. It is evident, that the associate presbytery did not mean to deny or conceal the sentence of the assembly: they have given the whole of it in their Declaration and Testimony; agreeably to which larger account, we are to understand what relates to the same subject in their acknowledgment of sins. It is evident, that the charge in the first process against Mr. Simson, of his teaching what was contrary to the word of God and the confession of faith, was not admitted by the assembly; nor were his expressions disapproved under that consideration. It is unreasonable to call every disapprobation church censure; and particularly a disapprobation in such lenient and general terms as those which the assembly used on this occasion.

Alex. The associate presbytery, says Mr. Willison, have cast slander on the mother church by alleging, in their Act and Testimony, or in some other papers emitted or adopted by them, "That the judi-"catories have overturned the foundation of the doctrine and govern-"ment of Christ's church; that they have subverted both her doctrine "and worship; and that they have done what in them lay to pull the "crown from Christ's head; that they have refused to give him the "glory of his Supreme Deity; and involved themselves in the guilt "of denying the Son of God, which is one special mark of Anti-"christ."†

Ruf. Mr. Willison ought to have signified, that these expressions are not taken from the Declaration and Testimony, or any other

* Wilson's Defence of Reformation Principles, pages 81, 82.

† Imp. Test. pages 169, 170.

judicial deed of the associate presbytery, but from private papers of accession to the associate presbytery, which had been published along with their Testimony.* Though an ecclesiastical body may be justly blamed for neglecting to censure errors or slanders contained in the writings of its members; yet it is not so accountable for the accuracy of such writings, as for that of their own judicial deeds. But was there not reason to say, that the foundations of sound doctrine were greatly shaken by the procedure of the judicatories, when they refused to pass due censure on account of fundamental errors, which were sufficiently proved before them? "The Son of God," as the judicious Mr. Boston said, "came to the bar of the general assembly of the church of "Scotland, demanding justice against a blasphemer, but did not ob-"tain it."

Was not the worship of the church corrupted by neglecting the due censure of such fundamental errors as tended to rob the Son of God, the object of christian worship, of his essential glory? And was there not too much ground to say, that these judicatories, by a long habitual course of arbitrary and tyrannical proceedings had been overturning the foundations of church government? so it is said on account of the oppression of rulers, That *all the foundations of the earth are gone out of their place.*†

The sense of the passage in the paper to which Mr. Willison refers cannot well be understood from his partial quotation. "The judicato-"ries," says that paper, "have been doing what in them lay to pull "the crown off Christ's head, refusing to give him the glory due to his "name, to give him the glory of his supreme Deity by resenting suita-"bly the blasphemous denial of some; and, instead thereof, have even "kept the blasphemer in full communion with the church; refusing "all calls to lay to heart or acknowledge their sin in this matter."

When Mr. Willison says, that the assembly in 1734, *did all that was in their power to satisfy the friends of reformation;*—the expression cannot be understood absolutely: for the assembly, if they had acted faithfully, as a court of Christ's free and independent kingdom, might have granted all that Mr. Erskine and his protesting brethren craved, as they asked nothing but what was agreeable to the covenanted principles and constitution of the reformed church of Scotland. But Mr. Willison meant, that the majority of that assembly exerted themselves as much in opposing some corruptions, as their degenerate condition admitted; for, says he, *there was, in that assembly, a mighty opposition of great men.* And why may not the expression in the private paper before mentioned, namely, "that the judicatories did what in them lay "to pull the crown from Christ's head," be understood as meaning, that, when the assembly were engaged in the attempt of screening Mr. Simson from the censure due to him for the blasphemous doctrine, which he was proved to have taught against the divinity of Christ, they did as much to pull the crown of divine glory from his head, as they could do, without openly giving up their pretensions to represent a church professing adherence to the scriptures and the Westminster confession of faith, or without renouncing their claim to the emolu-

* See the Display of the Secession Testimony, in the note at the foot of page 51.

† Psalm lxxxii. 5.

ments connected with that profession by the laws of the land? Besides, to say, that it was in their power to do more hurt to the church, in any other sense, would not accord with a due acknowledgment of the particular and infallible providence of God as exercised about all persons and things, and especially about all the concerns of the church.

Alex. Mr. Willison charges the associate presbytery with falsehood for asserting, that professor Campbell's error about self-love was adopted by the general assembly.*

Ruf. I shall read the words of the presbytery's acknowledgment of sin concerning this matter. "It has been publicly asserted and main-"tained by him," namely, by Mr. Campbell, "that the sole and uni-"versal motive to virtuous actions is self-love, interest or pleasure, "whereby self is exalted into the throne of God: and yet the assem-"bly, in the year 1736, not only dismissed the publisher of this, and "several such gross errors without any censure inflicted upon him or "any condemnation of his errors; but, instead of this, the assembly "admitted his explication of the article concerning self-love, viz. that "our delight in the honour and glory of God is the chief motive to all "virtuous and religious actions; whereby it appears, that the foresaid "assembly have adopted the above erroneous principle concerning "self-love as their own; in regard that the maintainer thereof does, "by the above explication, still make our delight (and so our self-love, "interest, or pleasure) the chief motive of all virtuous and religious "actions: so that, hereby the great idol self-love is still exalted and "placed in the throne of God; and the declarative glory of God is still "subordinated to self as our chief and highest end." Here are two things to be considered: 1st, a fact, which is, that the assembly did not censure Mr. Campbell for his opinion concerning self-love; but admitted his explication of it: 2dly, an inference from the fact, viz. that the assembly adopted his erroneous principle concerning self-love.

Alex. Mr. Willison says, "This error about self-love, and others, "were brought before the assembly in the year 1735, who referred "them to their commission; and the commission appointed a commit-"tee to consider them, and prepare their report for the next assembly. "Mr. Campbell laboured to give sound and orthodox explications of "his positions; which the committee brought before the assembly in "1736, with their remarks and censures upon them, and the recom-"mendation they judged fit to be given him. The assembly, upon "hearing Mr. Campbell at great length, were of opinion, that the com-"mittee's examining and stating the matter, as they had done, was "sufficient to caution him against the errors, with which he was charg-"ed; without their giving any judgement or formal sentence on the "committee's report; only they recommended it to him not to use "doubtful expressions, or propositions, which might lead his hearers "or readers into error." In the issue, indeed, there was no censure passed upon him; on which account Mr. Willison owns, that himself and many others were highly displeased. He owns, too, that, though the committee laid before the assembly Mr. Campbell's explication, you have mentioned, of his position of self-love; yet the assembly dismissed him without quarrelling with it. But this should be looked on

* Imp. Test. page 22.

as a pure oversight in the assembly through their not adverting to the import of the word *Delight;* but understanding *delight* in the glory of God as the same thing with regard to the glory of God, because of their affinity.*

Ruf. Mr. Willison then allows the fact that the assembly accepted Mr. Campbell's explication without quarrelling or finding fault with it; or, as the associate presbytery says, They admitted it. Nor is the truth of the fact affected by the excuse of oversight. From this fact the inference of the associate presbytery is, that the assembly adopted Mr. Campbell's opinion concerning self-love; because they approved his explication, which was only a different manner of expressing the same tenet, that he had taught in his writings. He was so far from retracting any thing he had advanced on this subject, that he confidently affirmed, "that his expressions did not go higher than his sentiments, and that his sentiments did not go beyond the nature of "things." But what shews still more clearly, that the assembly adopted Mr. Campbell's opinions, as expressed in his explication, is, their declaring, that no more was necessary for cautioning against the error on this head, that some at first supposed Mr. Campbell to be guilty of, than the following report of the committee: "They express "their opinion and good hopes, that Mr. Campbell had no unsound "meaning in asserting self-love to be the sole principle and standard "and motive of all religious actions; because he had declared before "them, that, by his saying, that the chief or sole motive to virtuous and "religious actions, was the desire of our own happiness, he meant no "more, than that our delight in the glory and honour of God, was the "chief motive." Now this is just the proposition in the approving of which the assembly is said by the associate presbytery to have adopted Mr. Campbell's opinion about self-love.

Alex. Mr. Willison says, When the assembly in the year 1737 were informed, that several had taken offence, as if the preceding assembly had adopted some of Mr. Campbell's offensive expressions on the head of self-love, they vindicated the church of Scotland from that charge by making an act declaring, that they do steadfastly adhere to the doctrine expressed in our standards on that head: particularly, in the answer to that question in our larger and shorter catechisms, "*What "is the chief end of man?*"

Ruf. This plea has been often offered, and as often rejected by Seceders; because they allege, that this is no more than what Mr. Campbell himself had done; for he always declared his adherence to the confession and catechisms; and how shall we know, whether the assembly's adherence to these standards in relation to the chief motive and end of virtuous and religious actions is any other or better than Mr. Campbell's? His adherence is to be understood in a sense consistent with what he had written on that subject, which he never retracted; and their adherence, in a sense consistent with their acceptance of his explanation, which, as we have seen, expressed in effect the same opinion concerning self-love contained in the passages of his writings that had been laid before them.

The general assembly in 1737 seem to have been chargeable with inconsistency or disingenuity, in saying, "that they gave no formal

* Imp. Test. pages 152, 153, 154.

"judgement or sentence on the report of their committee concerning "Mr. Campbell's opinion with regard to *self-love*;" although they declared, that report to be sufficient for cautioning against the error of which Mr. Campbell had been accused. This declaration was certainly a judgement, a final and definite judgement, on the committee's report. It is evident, that it had all the effect of such a judgement; for, on the ground of it, Mr. Campbell was dismissed without censure; and the assembly has never to this day seen cause to give any other judgement, or to make any more particular or express declaration of the truth in opposition to Mr. Campbell's opinion. Hence it appears, that the assembly's neglecting to censure Mr. Campbell's explication of some passages in his writings concerning *self-love*, was not a *mere* oversight; (whatever might have been the case with some worthy men who were members;) for if it had been so, they would have endeavoured to amend it afterwards; at least by a suitable assertion and vindication of the truth in direct opposition to Mr. Campbell's erroneous expressions.

§ 25. *Alex.* Mr. Willison charges the testimony of the associate presbytery with slander for asserting, that the errors of the professors Simson and Campbell and those of a publication, entitled *the Assembly's Shorter Catechism revised*, had overspread the church of Scotland, like a flood. With regard to that publication, Mr. Willison says, As soon as it was publicly known in Scotland, the commission took it under consideration, as the synod of Lothian had done before them; passed an act condemning it; and gave warning to all the presbyteries of this church, that they might be on their guard against the spreading infection of it.

Ruf. With regard to the errors of Messrs. Simson and Campbell; we have already seen, that those of the former were not duly censured; and that those of the latter were not censured at all. Mr. Campbell's opinion concerning self-love was, on the matter, adopted. These errors might be said to overspread the land; because the court, which was chargeable with suffering them to pass without any due censure, represented the whole church of Scotland. When the Corinthians neglected to censure the incestuous person, the apostle says to them, *Know ye not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;* and he applies the same truth to the case of the Galatians, when they were troubled with false teachers.*

As to *the Assembly's Catechism revised;* the associate presbytery say, that they would not have taken such particular notice of it, if it had not been well known to them, that the scheme of doctrine delivered in it was adapted to the depraved taste of the present age; in which revealed religion is so much despised, and the law of nature cried up as sufficient to direct men to true blessedness.

Mr. Willison, in his Testimony, complains of a legal way of preaching as prevailing. "There is great reason to fear," says he, "that "there is in the church and land very much of a legal and moral way of "preaching, exclusive of Christ, and to the neglect of the peculiar "doctrines of christianity." Mr. Willison could not consistently with this and various other passages of his Testimony, particularly, those in

* 1 Corinth. v. 6. Gal. v. 9.

which he regrets the conduct of the ecclesiastical judicatories in the cases of Messrs. Simson, Campbell, Wishart and Leechman, condemn the associate presbytery for lamenting the remarkable spread and prevalence of corrupt doctrine, at that time, in the church of Scotland.

§ 26. *Alex.* Mr. Willison says, that the assertion in the associate presbytery's acknowledgment of sins, that their Testimony was condemned in bulk by the assembly in 1738, is not fact.

Ruf. Mr. Willison here either denies a very plain fact, or he uses words in a sense different from the common acceptation of them. The assembly condemned the Testimony of the associate presbytery, not excepting any part of it. Is not this condemning it in bulk? The associate presbytery, in the passage referred to, express themselves with that plainness and simplicity which characterises all their compositions, and which leaves no room to mistake their meaning. "The general assembly," say they, "condemned *in bulk* the Testi-"mony emitted by the associate presbytery, as casting many ground-"less and calumnious reflections upon the said judicatories, without "condescending on any one of these, which they called groundless "and calumnious reflections." The judicial condemnation of a book, without specifying the particulars condemned, is a condemnation of it in *bulk*.

Alex. But farther, it is asserted in the associate presbytery's acknowledgment of sins, that the assembly in 1737, condemned the declinature of the associate presbytery, as containing nothing but groundless prejudices, which, Mr. Willison says, is not fact.

Ruf. I have here a copy of the act of the assembly, concerning the declinature of the associate presbytery. These are the words of it: "The assembly find, by the paper given in," (that is the declinature,) "that the said defenders," (the Seceding ministers,) "condemn this "church on several groundless pretences." There are no other words of their act that express a more favourable opinion of any part of the declinature. As this paper consisted of charges, upon the ground of which, the associate presbytery disowned the *authority* of the judicatories of the established church at that time; and as the assembly declared these charges to be indiscriminately groundless pretences; I can see no reason to blame any body for saying, that they condemned the whole, as containing nothing but groundless prejudices. It is evident, that the general assembly denied every one of the charges brought against them in this paper; and that all the reason they gave for the denial, was their assertion, that these ministers had condemned the church of Scotland on several *groundless pretences*, which, as the expression is here used, will not be denied to be equivalent to *groundless prejudices*. Mr. Willison seems to have been in a dilemma here: he was conscious, that every article of the declinature was founded on manifest and undeniable truth. But being predetermined to maintain a favourable opinion of the assembly, he could not bring himself to think, or at least to say, that that court would offer such a gross affront to truth and candour, as to deny the whole, under the name of groundless pretences; that is, he could not admit, that the assembly declared what, if he was present, he certainly heard them declare.

Alex. This is almost insufferable, Rufus, to suppose Mr. Willison's prepossessions to have been so strong as to deprive him of the use of his external senses.

Ruf. There have been philosophers, whose attachment to a favourite theory had such an effect. I shall only say, that this attempt to cover or excuse the assembly's great guilt, in representing the just charges brought against them by the associate presbytery as nothing but groundless pretences, is sufficient to justify any candid enquirer after truth, in questioning the fairness of that part of his Testimony which relates to the Seceding ministers.

§ 27. *Alex.* Mr. Willison censures the associate presbytery's acknowledgment of sins, because it represents the kind reception of Mr. Whitefield as increasing the sins of the land, and as a denying any particular form of church government to be of Divine institution; which, says he, is false.

Ruf. To do justice to the presbytery, let us hear their own words, which I shall read. "The sins and provocations of this land are far-
"ther increased by the kind reception that many, both ministers and
"people, have given to Mr. George Whitefield, a professed member
"and priest of the superstitious church of England; and by the great
"entertainment that has been given to *latitudinarian tenets*, as far-
"ther propagated by him and others, whereby any particular form of
"church government is denied to be of Divine institution; and under
"a pretence of *catholic love*, a scheme is laid for uniting parties of all
"denominations in church communion, in a way destructive of any
"testimony for the declarative glory of IMMANUEL, who is the
"Head and King of Zion, and for the covenanted reformation of this
"church and land: for which a righteous God hath justly *chosen their*
"*delusions*, and sent forth a spirit of delusion among them, in the pre-
"sent awful work upon the bodies and spirits of men."

Alex. What connexion had the kind reception given to Mr. Whitefield with the scheme of *catholic*, or, as you call it, *latitudinarian communion*, which was the subject of our former conversations?

Ruf. The countenance that was given to the ministrations of Mr. Whitefield, was connected with that scheme of church communion, in two respects.

1st, It was a receding from the testimony which the ministers and other members of the church of Scotland were bound by their principles to maintain against the episcopal government and superstitious ceremonies of the church of England; and also, against the acknowledgment of the king's supremacy in all spiritual and ecclesiastic, as well as civil causes. Mr. Whitefield had acknowledged the king of England to have such power over the church there, and had engaged at his ordination, (which was by the laying on of the hands of the diocesan bishop) to be subject to the hierarchy of that church. When the associate presbytery pressed him to a conversation about the government of the church, he told them plainly, that he had no difficulty about that matter; that he was of the communion of the church of England, and was resolved to continue so, till he should be thrust out.* Now, it was quite inconsistent with the Testimony of Pres-

* See Mr. Fisher's Review of what has been called an extraordinary work at Cambuslang, Kilsyth, &c. near the conclusion.

byterians against the episcopal government of the church of England, and the king's supremacy over it, to hold communion with a minister who avowed himself to be a member of that church, and who never acknowledged any thing in its constitution to be sinful.

2dly, The countenance that was given to Mr. Whitefield's ministrations was an approbation of the latitudinarian scheme; as that scheme was avowed and taught by him. It is uncandid to require any proof of Mr. Whitefield's design to propagate this scheme; because he made no secret of it; but was perpetually declaiming against all debates about modes of religious worship and of church government, as vain and prejudicial to vital religion. This, with the manifest tendency of his journals, and some other publications at that time, convinced the associate presbytery, that a plan was then laid for uniting parties of all denominations in *church communion*, in a way destructive of any testimony for the declarative glory of IMMANUEL, as Head and King of Zion; a testimony to which the people of Great Britain had bound themselves by the solemn league and covenant. Mr. Whitefield and his party at that time spoke very extravagantly of the advantages of what is called catholic communion.

"If each church, said he, could produce but one man a piece, who "had the *piety* of an apostle, and the impartial love of the first chris- "tians in the first church of Jerusalem, a *Protestant* and a *Papist* of "this stamp would not want half a sheet to hold their articles of "union, nor would there be half an hour before they would be of one "religion.—He that would like as God likes, and condemn as God "condemns, must neither have the eyes of a Papist, nor those *of a* "Protestant."* "There is a catholic spirit," said one of Mr. White- "field's party, "a communion of saints in the love of God and all "goodness, which no one can learn from that which is called ORTHO- "DOXY in particular churches; but is only to be had by such an unc- "tion from above, as makes the mind love truth and goodness, with "an equality of affection in every man, whether he be Christian, Jew, "or Gentile."†

At the same time, the Moravians and Quakers were celebrated as *patterns* of piety, and of a catholic spirit. But there was a deep silence as to all the zeal and faithfulness which ministers and people have manifested in contending against prelacy and other corruptions of the protestant churches. It is evident, that, according to this scheme of uniting different parties in one church communion, a testimony maintained by any of these parties, for such truths of God's word as are denied by others of them, was to be laid aside and buried, and particularly a testimony for the truth of God respecting the external form of worship and government in the church of Christ; a testimony which is evidently for the declarative glory of Immanuel, as Head and King of Zion. Hence, the associate presbytery might well acknowledge, that this latitudinarian scheme of church communion was destructive of such a testimony.

* A letter written by Mr. Whitefield to the religious societies of England, reprinted with an address to the societies of Scotland.

† An extract subjoined to the above-mentioned letter, page 23 and 24. This extract Mr. Whitefield adopts, as "exactly expressing the language of his own heart."

Alex. Mr. Willison tells us, that Mr. Whitefield was come the length to assert openly, that Christ is the Head and King of his church, and that the church of Scotland was the best constituted national church in the world.*

Ruf. The first of these assertions was inconsistent with the oath which he took at his ordination, acknowledging the king to be head of the church of England; an acknowledgment which it does not appear that he ever owned to be sinful. And as to the last, concerning the church of Scotland, it was inconsistent with his resolution to continue a member of the church of England till he was thrust out. Whether the ascribing these assertions to Mr. Whitefield, be not a greater reflection on his character than any thing that was ever said of him by the associate presbytery, I leave you, or any other honest man, to judge.

Alex. If God think fit to make use of Mr. Whitefield, or other Methodists, to turn sinners from their evil ways, to seek after a Saviour, and God through him, we should not oppose it, but let them alone; lest haply we be found fighting against God.†

Ruf. We may find Prelates and Papists, who were instrumental in doing much good: Are we therefore to receive them into church communion, without requiring them to renounce their Popery or Prelacy? By no means. Because the Lord may make use of Methodists in awakening and convincing sinners, and in bringing them to the knowledge of some of his truths, it does not follow, that we ought to have communion with them in their contempt of the order and government of Christ's house, and in their Arminian doctrine. Nor do we oppose what is truly good and commendable in any, when we refuse to countenance their obstinacy in errors or disorders. When the Seceders allege the errors or disorders of Mr. Whitefield or any others, as a reason for their refusing to hold communion with them; it is no way to the purpose, to expatiate on what God has done for them and by them: the simple question is this; whether their errors and disorders be of such a nature, and so obstinately persisted in, as to render it unwarrantable to have church communion with them, without an acknowledgment of these offences?

On the whole, Sir, with regard to the article under consideration, it cannot reasonably be denied, that, by the kind reception which Mr. Whitefield met with amongst ministers and people, there was great countenance and encouragement given to the lax scheme of church communion, which he and his adherents propagated; implying, among other things, that it is no duty incumbent on the people of God, to maintain a testimony against the diocesan episcopacy and superstitious ceremonies of the church of England. If this scheme of church communion is contrary to the word of God, how can it be denied, that the countenance given to it by so many *ministers* and people increased the sins of the land? How then is Mr. Willison justifiable, in calling the associate presbytery's acknowledgment of sins to this purpose, *an assertion of falsehood?*

It may be added, that Mr. Willison ought not to have represented the associate presbytery as asserting in this passage, that the kind reception of Mr. Whitefield was a denying any particular form of

* Imp. Test. page 226. † Ibid.

church government to be of Divine institution; while their words are, that, by the kind reception, which he met with, "great entertainment "was given to latitudinarian tenets, by which any particular form of "church government is denied to be of Divine institution." The associate presbytery did not mean to charge every person, that countenanced Mr. Whitefield, with formally denying that truth; but with doing what gave entertainment or countenance to the denial of it. And it is certain that by our countenancing and following a celebrated preacher who, by his public profession, teaches any error, entertainment or countenance is given to that error.

Alex. We may now proceed to consider what the associate presbytery looked on as a righteous judgement of God, for the kind entertainment that was given to Mr. Whitefield and latitudinarianism. With regard to this, Mr. Willison says, "They represent the blessed work "in the West of Scotland as a delusion."

Ruf. The members of the associate presbytery were far from presuming to say, that none were savingly wrought upon by the Holy Spirit under the ministry of Mr. Whitefield and others, where this work was carried on. They were far from limiting the Holy Spirit who works when and upon whom he is pleased to work, wherever there is a dispensation of his own word, even though it should be attended with many corruptions; as in the church of England, or in the Greek church. Besides, when they say, "*a spirit of delusion is sent forth* "*among the subjects of this work;*" it is not meant, that all those who appeared to be under the influence of such a spirit, were in an unregenerate state, or destitute of saving grace. They knew, that good men may, in the holy sovereignty of God, and as an humbling correction, be left for a time under the influence of a spirit of delusion. Thus when Peter dissuaded our Saviour from his sufferings, he was under the influence of Satan, as our Lord intimated, when he said to Peter, "*Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou art an offence to me.*" God's leaving the truly pious to fall into open sins may be ordered as a righteous judgement on the generation among whom they dwell. Of this Gideon's ephod and David's numbering the people were instances. Keeping these cautions in view, we may allow, that the associate presbytery were justifiable in acknowledging, that a work of delusion was carried on at that time, for several reasons.

In the first place, the doctrine, that an imaginary idea of Christ as man is helpful to faith, was preached and defended by Mr. Robe, minister of Kilsyth, and others, as a doctrine which was verified in the experience of the subjects of this work. Now *this imaginary idea* of Christ is a delusion; for we can have no imaginary idea of any person as man but a human person. But Christ is a Divine Person; and in all his mediatorial works and sufferings, he is to be viewed, not as a mere man, but as God-man.*

In the second place, so far as bodily convulsions or involuntary fits were taken for any part of the saving work of the Holy Spirit in conversion, as for certain evidences of that work; so far a spirit of delusion prevailed. For the saving work of the Holy Spirit is immediately

* Mr. Ralph Erskine's Faith no Fancy, or treatise of mental images, is an excellent illustration and defence of this doctrine. There seems to be no book of human composure on the person of Christ, which deserves better to be perused by students in divinity.

upon the understanding and the will; and the proper evidence of it, consists in the gracious exercise of these renewed faculties in faith, love, repentance, new obedience. Nay, it seems delusive to take the appearance of violent bodily convulsions in multitudes of persons for any sign of the revival of the Lord's work in the church; because, we have neither precept nor example of it in scripture; as what ever was or ever would be, in any period, a sign of the success of the gospel. There is not one certain example of such involuntary motions, or violent convulsions attending the ministry of the apostles.

Alex. Mr. Willison says, It is unreasonable to require instances in scripture for every minute circumstance of the innumerable various cases of persons brought to Christ.*

Ruf. But how is this applicable to the work in question; the subjects of which, however various their characters and cases, are said to have been generally seized with bodily convulsions, which were commonly mentioned, not as minute circumstances, but as a conspicuous part of the work, and as what could not be accounted for without admitting them to proceed from the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit in the conviction or conversion of sinners. Seceders do not think, that we may expect to find examples in scripture of every circumstance accidentally attending the saving work of the Holy Spirit under the gospel; but they believe, that, we may find, in scripture, examples of those things which, in any period, attend that work as effects or signs of it. Mr. Whitefield himself does not seem to have esteemed these bodily affections so much as some of his followers. "These bodily convulsions," said he, "I believe, come from the devil, "who wants to bring an evil report on the work of God, now going on "among us, by such fits."†

In the third place, the associate presbytery, when they agreed on their acknowledgment of public sins, were deeply impressed with the guilt of the judicatories of the church of Scotland, in carrying on a course of defection from the received principles of the church of Scotland; and in countenancing erroneous teachers, such as Simson and Campbell; in censuring a testimony for gospel truth formerly given by those who were called Marrow-men, and afterwards by the associate presbytery; in the violent intrusion of ministers on reclaiming congregations; in subordinating themselves in the exercise of their ecclesiastical functions to the civil power. Hence when these and the like public corruptions were countenanced; and the maintaining of any faithful testimony against them was condemned, and virulently reproached, as bigotry, envy and pride, by the generality of the most active promoters of what was called a gracious work of the Spirit; the members of the associate presbytery could not help believing, that there must be delusion in the case; for none could be led by the Holy Spirit of God to justify corruptions so contrary to his word, nor to oppose and reproach a faithful testimony against them.

We may, on these grounds, safely conclude, that, according to the principles of the associate presbytery, which are the genuine principles of the church of Scotland in her reforming times, the particulars which were pointed out as attending that work on the bodies and spirits of men, are justly acknowledged to be delusions.

* Imp. Test. pages 186, 187. † Journal, part 3d, page 63.

It may also be remarked upon this article, as upon some other articles, that Mr. Willison neither quotes the words of the associate presbytery, nor gives the sense of them fairly. When he represents the associate presbytery as swearing that the blessed work in the West of Scotland is a delusion; a reader may be led to conclude, that the associate presbytery meant, that whatever was said to belong to that work; that all the conviction of sin, the knowledge of Christ, the praying, reading and hearing the word of God, and other pious exercises ascribed to the subjects and promoters of this work, were delusions. But the words of the associate presbytery will bear no such construction. One should think, that it was not difficult for Mr. Willison to have given a fair representation of the judgement of the associate presbytery on this subject; because the members of it had been very explicit in pointing out the particulars which they accounted evils in that work. In an act, for example, published in the year 1742, containing reasons for a fast, they have the following words in relation to this work: "Bitter outcryings, faintings, severe bodily pains, convulsions, "visions, are the usual symptoms of a delusive spirit. The promoters "of this work are going on in the same course of defection, as before. "The following fruits and effects of it are undeniably evident, viz. "The warmest aversion and opposition to a testimony for our cove-"nanted reformation; for the very same principles, which have been "sworn to, and suffered for unto blood, in these lands, as if it were "nothing but bigotry and party zeal; and the closest conjunction with "such ministers, whether intruders or not, as are continuing to bear "down those principles with a high hand; contrary to the practice of "scripture converts, and the experience of the saints of God in this "land; who, upon their conversion, still espoused the testimony of "their day, and contended for the present truth."

Mr. Willison never attempts to state with precision, the question between the associate presbytery and their opponents; but runs out into a long enumeration of things which, he says, were found in the subjects of this work; and which, as he might have charitably believed, the members of presbytery were fully as glad to hear of being found in these people or in any other, as he himself could be. The truth is, when we read what was written by Mr. Willison, Mr. Robe, and other advocates for this work, we are led to suppose, that there was a most remarkable revival of the Holy Spirit's work in convincing and converting sinners; and in exciting them to liveliness and zeal in prayer, hearing the preached gospel, and other religious exercises; but that all this was opposed, with the greatest malignity, by the Seceders, on pretence of some trifling disorders and omissions. On the other hand, when we read what was written on this subject by the members of the associate presbytery, we do not find one syllable against such religious exercises: it appears that what they censured and lamented in this work was nothing else but these evils, which were called their pretences, and which no supposed connexion with commendable things, could make right.

§ 28. *Alex.* Mr. Willison adds, This is but a swatch [or sample] of the many false aspersions contained in their writings, besides those which they cast on their brethren in their sermons. There are indeed

many evils in the national church; but it is sinful to calumniate her, and make her defections greater than they are.*

Ruf. Since there is no proof of slander in any of the passages which Mr. Willison has produced from the writings of the associate presbytery, he could not reasonably refer us for proof of it to passages which he has omitted. The facts, upon which the associate presbytery have grounded their charges against the established church of Scotland, are correctly stated from the public and authentic records of that church. Indeed Mr. Willison's own account of most of these facts is not much different from theirs. Only with regard to several of them, whilst the associate presbytery condemns them as contrary to the word of God and as grounds of his controversy with the church, Mr. Willison apologizes for them and extenuates the sin of those who were actually concerned in them. Thus, he wishes, that the first general assembly of the church of Scotland, after the revolution, had been more explicit, with respect to the fearful indignities done to the covenants into which the people of Scotland had entered for religion and reformation; and that they had applied to the civil powers for their concurrence in the renovation of them. But then he observes, that those who knew the difficulties which our ancestors had to struggle with, will rather be inclined to pity, than to censure them. He owns the omissions of the general assembly in the case of Mr. Simson; but makes an apology by telling us, that some said it would be better to bind him up by suspension, and, by keeping him under it, than by deposition, to provoke a man of his learning to make open attacks upon the most important truths of our holy religion. He allows, that the assembly recommended the report of their committee, which approved Mr. Campbell's explanation of his opinion in these words; "That our delight in the "glory of God is the chief motive to virtuous actions." But then he adds, that this should be looked upon as a pure oversight in the assembly, through their not adverting to the import of the word *delight;* and that they afterwards vindicated themselves by declaring their adherence to the answer of the larger and shorter catechisms to the question, What is the chief end of man? though Mr. Willison knew, that Mr. Campbell himself had made the same declaration without retracting any of his errors. Again, he seems to acknowledge the sin of the ministers in reading the act of parliament concerning captain Porteus; but, on the other hand, he adds, that there were several pious and conscientious ministers, who read this act; and who, says he, we are in charity bound to think acted sincerely in this, as in other matters. That such apologies in Mr. Willison's Testimony, are instances of vile daubing with untempered mortar, appears from the view we have taken of the cases to which they refer. His dealing in such frivolous excuses, is just as if the Levites, in their confession recorded in the tenth chapter of Nehemiah, having acknowledged the sin of making the golden calf which the Israelites worshipped in the wilderness, had added, that, as for Aaron and other good men concerned in that affair, they had no ill design: or, as if Paul had attempted to excuse Peter, Barnabas and others, in the affair of dissimulation mentioned in the second chapter of the epistle to the Galatians, saying, These good men

* Imp. Test. page 170.

had no design of dissembling, or of not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. But we never find the saints in scripture enervating their testimonies against public evils, or their acknowledgment of them, by any softening or extenuating expressions. I know not how it can be denied, that the associate presbytery's plain, pointed, particular manner of testifying against the sins of the present generation, and of their fathers, was just the manner of Moses, of Elijah, of Jeremiah, of Ezra and Nehemiah, of Christ and his apostles. I cannot help remarking, that Mr. Willison shews us in the passage you have recited, what account he and others would have made of any faithful testimony, that might have been given by these brethren from the pulpit, if they had continued in the communion of the established church; for their testimony in that way, would have been just what Mr. Willison calls their daily casting aspersions on their brethren in their sermons. The matter of such a testimony would have been the same public corruptions which are specified in their judicial testimony, their declinature, and other public papers: and I have not understood that any other evils were mentioned in the sermons to which Mr. Willison alludes. He inveighs against these brethren for their secession from the established church, and insists that they might have maintained a doctrinal testimony in the way of communion: but how could Mr. Willison himself have kept communion with them, if he had found them daily casting false aspersions upon their brethren, calumniating the church, and making her defections far greater than they really were? Ought not Mr. Willison to have been rather thankful for the removal of such slanderers from the communion of the established church. One design of his pretended impartial testimony, which serves to account for its inconsistencies, is, to reconcile his former profession of zeal for the covenanted principles of the church of Scotland with his then present conjunction with the backsliding judicatories in opposition to the Seceders; two things which were quite irreconcilable.

§ 29. *Alex.* There are some things, which Seceders consider as important evils, against which they judge it necessary to bear testimony, which, in the opinion of sensible men, are trifles. Thus they speak much against the common use of lots. I am against games of chance; for I know, that playing at cards and dice has ruined many. A gambler is a despicable character. But may not persons amuse themselves with drawing cuts or tossing a cent? Why may he not, if he can afford it, purchase a ticket of a public lottery? I must own I have no favourable opinion of such as place any moral good or evil in such things.

Ruf. Sometimes things which at first appear trivial are found, upon more serious consideration, to have much good or evil in them, which we had overlooked before. In England, by a statute in the reign of king William III, all lotteries were declared to be public nuisances; and all grants, patents, or licences for them to be contrary to law.* But now, state-lotteries are much used in raising supplies for the expenses of government; and among us public lotteries are often advertised, and people are invited to purchase their tickets for the building of churches or houses for public worship. The Seceders believe, that the proposers of such lotteries, and the buyers and sellers of their tickets, ought to be censured, and not connived at or encouraged by

* Blackstone's Commentary, Book iv. chap. 13.

church rulers. The reasons they give for this article of their profession, are chiefly two.

In the first place, because we have no warrant to use lots for the purpose of getting money. A lot is warrantably used for determining a matter in debate; the determination of which is otherwise impracticable. Prov. xviii. 18, *The lot parteth between the mighty, and causeth contentions to cease.* A lot is a solemn appeal to God, for an immediate decision of the matter in question, by the agency of his Providence. Prov. xvi. 33, *The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* The matter, about which this appeal is made, ought to be of great necessity and importance. Hence, this ordinance is abused, when persons set about it without solemn deliberation and earnest prayer; or when they resort to it in trivial matters, or in cases which they might determine by the proper use of their reason. It is a flagrant abuse of the lot, to attempt to get money by means of it. A gaming table, which is a private lottery, is generally allowed to be an unlawful way of getting money. Hence, according to the statute law of England, all bonds and other securities, given for money won at play, are utterly void; and a person who, at any time or sitting, loses ten pounds at play, may sue the winner, and recover it by an action of debt at law.* If the getting of money by a lottery be unlawful, the circumstance of its being public will not make it lawful: nor will the pious use, to which we propose to apply the money thus attained, make the lottery lawful; unless we admit the Jesuitical doctrine, that sinful means are sanctified by the goodness of the end proposed; or, in other words, that *we may do evil, that good may come.* Besides, public lotteries manifestly tend to encourage private, by the force of example. Thus they promote the spirit and pernicious habit of gaming.

In the second place, the Seceders disapprove the method of raising money for the public use of either church or state by lotteries; because there are other ways agreeable to scripture and reason, which are sufficient for that purpose; such as taxes imposed by the civil authority, or voluntary contributions. These are means on which we may warrantably seek and expect the Divine blessing.

But the purchasing of tickets in a lottery, whatever use is proposed to be made of the profits arising from it, is not only different from, but opposite to, the duty of honoring the Lord with our substance, by giving freely for a pious and charitable use, or by conscientiously contributing our share toward bearing the necessary expenses of civil government: for, in purchasing the tickets of a lottery, persons are naturally influenced by the prizes offered in the advertisement, and their minds, of course, inflamed with vain imaginations and prospects of becoming suddenly rich.

Alex. By this means, many are induced to contribute liberally to the building of houses for public worship, who otherwise would not part with a cent for any such purpose.

Ruf. You ought to have added, that in this way, the awful and solemn ordinance of the lot is prostituted for the sake of worldly gain; and, by such an example, the pernicious practice of gaming for money is encouraged. It is not too much to say, that money, gained

* Blackstone's Com. book iv. chap. 13.

by such means, is no better than the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, which ought never to come into the house of the Lord.

Alex. I do not wish to insist on this subject, nor to be considered as an advocate for public lotteries; though I know, that they have been defended by some great and good men.

Ruf. Men who, on various accounts, are entitled to these epithets, have defended playing at cards; yet the generality of tender christians, who read few other books than their Bible, are at no loss to see and abhor the sinfulness of that practice.

> Not many wise, rich, noble or profound
> In science, win one inch of heavenly ground;
> And is it not a mortifying thought,
> The poor should gain it, and the rich should not?
>
> COWPER'S TRUTH.

§ 30. *Alex.* I shall only mention another instance of the weakness of the Seceders. They complain of the other churches, for not testifying against the Mason word or oath. I suppose, people of other denominations have more sense than to lift up a testimony against that which they know nothing of, as the Seceders have done.

Ruf. Since we began to converse about the secession body, we have considered several things, against which they bear testimony; we have found them to be either the public acts and proceedings of judicatories, or matters that have been long, generally and publicly practised; or that have been published by the press to the world. These were things which they could not fail to know, unless they were willing to remain ignorant of the state of the Presbyterian church in Scotland and America. So that I can hardly conceive a more weak and silly objection against their testimony concerning such things, than this, that it is a testimony against that of which they knew nothing.

Alex. This may hold true, however, with regard to their testimony against the Mason oath, which, though it has been from time immemorial in use among a certain class of people, is still said to be to all others an impenetrable secret.

Ruf. If you mean, that the Seceders proceeded to condemn that oath, before they had been careful to obtain sufficient information, I refer you to an act of the associate synod on that subject, passed at Edinburgh, in the year 1757. An overture had been laid before that synod, in the year 1745, bearing, that there were very strong presumptions, that among Masons, an oath of secrecy is administered to persons at their entrance into their society, even under a capital penalty, and before any of these things, which they swear to keep secret, be revealed to them; and that they pretend to take some of these secrets from the Bible; besides other things, which are ground of scruple in the manner of swearing said oath; proposing, that the synod should consider the whole affair; and give directions with respect to the admission of persons, who are engaged in that oath, to sealing ordinances. The synod then remitted this overture to the several sessions subordinate to them; directing them to proceed therein, as far as they should find practicable, according to received and known principles, and the plain rule of God's word and sound reason. About ten years afterward, the synod appointed the sessions

under their inspection to require all persons in their respective congregations, who were presumed or suspected to have been engaged in that oath, to make a plain acknowledgment, whether or not they have ever been so; and to require, that such as they may find to have been engaged therein, should give ingenuous answers to what further enquiry the sessions may see cause to make concerning the tenor and administration of the said oath to them. In the year 1757, the synod found, that from the time, at which the overture concerning the Mason oath was first laid before them, that is, for about twelve years, the sessions subordinate to them had been dealing with persons under their inspection. From the confessions made to these sessions, the synod was led to consider this oath as a heinous profanation of the Lord's name; and to direct the sessions, in dealing with Masons and others involved in this oath, to put the following questions to them: Whether it was not an oath binding them to keep a number of secrets, none of which, before swearing it, they were allowed to know? Whether the oath did not contain, besides a solemn invocation of the Lord's name, a clause subjecting the swearer, in case of breaking it, to some such penalty as that of having his tongue and heart taken out? Whether the oath was not administered to them with several superstitious ceremonies; such as, requiring them to deliver up any thing of metal, which they had upon them; and making them kneel upon their right knee bare, holding up their right arm bare, with their elbow upon the Bible, or with the Bible laid before them; or having the Bible, as also the square and compasses, in some particular way applied to their bodies?—and whether, among the secrets which they were bound by the oath to keep, there was not a passage of scripture read to them, particularly 1 Kings vi. 21, with or without some explanation of it? The synod determined, that persons who would refuse to give plain and particular answers to the foregoing questions, shall be reputed under scandal,—incapable of admission to sealing ordinances, till they answer and give satisfaction.*

It is evident, from this account, that the act of the associate synod concerning the Mason oath cannot be said to have been gone into rashly: it was the result of an enquiry carried on by the sessions subordinate to the synod for twelve years in a great many different places. This oath is indeed a gross profanation of the Lord's name. The taker of it binds himself to keep a number of secrets before he has the least knowledge of them; and subjects himself to a penalty, the execution of which, upon the account specified in the oath, would be horrid murder. The taking of the oath, as it implies an agreement to the execution of that penalty, is a trampling upon the laws of God and man. It does not appear, that their signs and secrets are any thing else but vain superstition. The Mason lodges of many different and distant nations, are said to be intimately connected. Hence, the influence of their profane and superstitious practices must be extensive; against which it is the more necessary to give a faithful warning. It appears from the account lately given of the *Illuminati*, by professor Robinson and Barrouil, that in Germany and France, Mason lodges had been employed as vehicles for propagating the most pernicious principles and counsels against religion and civil government.

* See the Display of the Secession Testimony, pages 128, 129, 130.

DIALOGUE III.

The occasion of the associate presbytery's act concerning the doctrine of grace.....A proposition agreed on by the presbytery of Auchterarder, and condemned by the general assembly.....The Marrow of Modern Divinity condemned by an act of the assembly.....The representation of the gospel as a free grant of a Saviour to sinners of mankind indefinitely, vindicated.....An appropriation of Christ to ourselves in particular, necessarily included in saving faith.....The assembly's making good works necessary as a federal condition of justification and salvation, shewn to be a dangerous error.....The freedom of believers from the commanding and condemning power of the law as a covenant of works.....The motives by which believers ought to be influenced in yielding gospel obedience.....The distinction between the law as a covenant, and the law as a rule of life, necessary.....The evangelical grounds of obedience to the law.....An act passed by the associate synod against Arminian errors on the head of universal redemption.....Christ's suretyship described.....Who they are, for whom he laid down his life.....His love to them.....Christ's death and intercession of the same extent as to their objects.....Salvation secured by the death of Christ to all the objects of it.....Benefits of which ungodly men are partakers, not purchased for them by the death of Christ.....Universal redemption, not the ground of the gospel offer.

Rufus was recovering from a dangerous illness, when he was again visited by Alexander. On this occasion, after mutual congratulations, the conversation took the following turn:—

Ruf. In my sickness, when I was brought low, even to the gates of death, the only consolation, in which I found rest, was the gospel, especially considered as the free grant of a Saviour, and as affording me a sufficient warrant to say, In him have I, a poor sinner, righteousness and salvation.*

Alex. I hope you had that faith which worketh by love. But your language savours of the definition which the associate presbytery give of saving faith in their act concerning the doctrine of grace. Mr. Willison says, that though there be many precious truths in that act, yet there are some assertions too loose, unguarded, and even bordering too near the doctrine called Antinomianism; which, as he justly observes, ought to be avoided, as well as Neonomian doctrine.† For my own part, I hold Antinomianism to be most abominable; whether it be more gross, such as that of the Libertines against whom Calvin wrote; or more refined, as that of Eaton, Saltmarsh and others, in the seventeenth century, who were refuted by Burgess, Rutherford and others. They are justly called Antinomians, who deny that christians ought to have any regard to the holy law of God, as the rule of their conduct; or that they ought to mourn for their sins before God.

* "While in my extremity, death stared me in the face, the doctrine of the Marrow "concerning the gift and grant; and that scripture, 1 John v. 11, *And this is the record, "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son;* accordingly understood, that God hath given to us mankind-sinners, and to me in particular, eternal life, "&c. whereby it is lawful for me to take possession of it as my own; was the sweet and "comfortable prop of my soul, believing it and claiming it accordingly."
Memoirs of Mr. Thomas Boston, page 376.

† Impartial Test. pages 218, 219.

§ 31. *Ruf.* I cordially agree with your opinion of real Antinomianism. All those, however, that have been called Antinomians, ought not to be censured indiscriminately. Hornbeck observes, that some of them did not recede so much from the doctrine of the reformed churches, as from the common method of teaching it; and that they neglected to observe, first, that obeying God, as influenced by the Spirit of Christ, and obeying him from a regard to the authority of his law, consist well together; and ought not to be separated: and, secondly, that it is one thing to make good works the foundation of the faith and hope of our salvation; it is another thing to consider good works as fruits and evidences of those graces serving to ascertain their sincerity. They were right in denying the former, and wrong in denying the latter.* At the same time, what the associate presbytery mention, in the introduction to their act concerning the doctrine of grace, must be acknowledged to be a lamentable fact, viz. That the noise raised by some ministers against such as were faithful preachers of the doctrine of grace, as if they had been teachers of Antinomianism, occasioned the truths of the gospel to be every where evil spoken of. Mr. Robert Trail, in his excellent letter concerning the doctrine of justification through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, intimates, that he and other ministers, who preached that doctrine, were called Antinomians. Because, in the Marrow of Modern Divinity, it is stated as one of the differences between the law or covenant of works and the law of Christ, that the former says, Do this for life; but the latter says, Do this from life: the celebrated Mr. Baxter most unjustly represents the author of that treatise as an Antinomian, and his doctrine as so foully erroneous, that, if reduced to practice, it will be the damnation of the practisers.† Certain passages of the same book were condemned as Antinomian errors, by an act of the general assembly of the church of Scotland, passed in 1720; by which act a deep wound was given to several precious doctrines of the gospel; as is shewn by the associate presbytery, in their act concerning the doctrine of grace.

When Mr. Willison said, that some of the assertions in that act of the associate presbytery are loose and unguarded, and even bordering on Antinomianism, he ought to have pointed out these assertions. It was the more necessary, that he should have done so, that the members of the presbytery, as he knew, were well entitled to the character of able and judicious divines, who were far from being apt to use loose and unguarded expressions on any occasion; but especially in a judicial deed, solemnly passed in the name of the Lord Jesus.

§ 32. *Alex.* This act takes notice of a proposition, that had been agreed on by the presbytery of Auchterarder; viz. "That it is not "orthodox to teach, that we must forsake sin in order to our coming "to Christ, and to our being instated in the covenant with God." That presbytery, it seems, required satisfaction concerning this proposition, from the young men whom they took on trial for the ministry. One of these candidates, having refused to comply with the presbytery's requisition, appealed to the general assembly. The assembly gave their judgement in the young man's favour.

* Vide Hornbeckii Summam Controver. lib. x. page 701—722.

† The Saints' Everlasting Rest, part i. chap. 1st, sect. 7.

Ruf. Yes, Alexander; that court in the year 1717, on the same day on which they dismissed the process against professor Simson without any formal censure, condemned, in the strongest terms, the proposition you have mentioned, declaring their abhorrence of it as unsound and most detestable.

Alex. I suppose they judged it to be an Antinomian tenet.

Ruf. The judicious Mr. Boston, who was present at that assembly, says in his Memoirs, that he believed the proposition to be truth; and that he bitterly regreted that he had not spoken in its defence, when it came before the assembly. "I was obliged," says he, "to speak on it "and exonor my conscience, when it was out of season, at the reading "of the minutes."

According to this act of assembly, it would be sound doctrine to teach, That a sinner must forsake his sin in order to his coming to Christ; a position which the associate presbytery, condemns for several reasons:

1st, Because, although it is the unquestionable duty of the creature to forsake and abandon whatever is forbidden by the law of his Creator; yet, upon the revelation of the grace of God in the promise of the gospel, it is plain that the first and leading duty required in the law is to believe that report; for *without faith it is impossible to please God. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.** Hence it follows, that, according to the scripture, every act of the soul, as performed by a person before saving faith, or coming to Christ, is sin; and therefore no such act can be a forsaking of sin.

2dly, Because our forsaking of sin, (being a branch of true repentance, importing purification of heart and the exercise of love, which is a fulfilling of the law) is in scripture expressly declared to be a fruit of faith; which faith is the soul's coming to Christ.† To maintain, that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ is as much as to say, that we must have repentance, love and purity of heart in order to our believing in Christ; that we must repent of our sins in order to our coming to him who is exalted to give repentance as well as the forgiveness of sins. Whereas the Spirit of God has declared, *that God, having raised up his Son Jesus, hath sent him to bless us in turning away every one of us from his iniquity;* and that sinners are called and invited to come and look to Christ for salvation both from sin and wrath; and that without regard to any previous qualification in themselves. This coming is indeed inconsistent with a resolution to go on in sin; yet it is plain no sinner can wash himself before he come to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. It is vain to pretend to any gracious, evangelical or acceptable act, but by virtue of grace and strength derived from Christ; or until the soul come to Christ, and be united to him as the living root and fountain of all gracious influence. To teach that we must be holy or so and so qualified, in order to our coming to Christ and having vital union with him, is the very soul of Arminian and Neonomian doctrine.

3dly, Because, while the forsaking of sin is no small part of conversion, this act of the assembly evidently tends to exalt man's natural

* Heb. xi. 6. John iii. 36.

† Gal. v. 6. Acts iii. 26. v. 31. xv. 9. Zechar. xii. 10. Isai. xlv. 22.

powers and his own ability to convert himself or prepare himself thereto; and thus it greatly favours the Pelagian doctrine on this head; expressly contrary to scripture, which declares, that we are dead in trespasses and sins; without strength; yea, that our mind is enmity against God.

In opposition to this act of the assembly, the associate presbytery asserted and declared, that it is the duty of all, upon the revelation of Christ in the gospel, instantly, without looking for any previous qualifications in themselves, to believe in him for salvation both from sin and wrath; that, in so doing only, they will be made, in a gospel manner, to mourn for sin, forsake it, and live unto righteousness; and that it is not possible for any man to forsake sin or actually to exercise gospel repentance, till he is determined and enabled by the power of the Spirit of faith, to look or come to Christ, the Prince and Saviour exalted to give repentance and the forgiveness of sin.

§ 33. *Alex.* With regard to the act of the assembly condemning several passages of the Marrow of Modern Divinity, Mr. Willison says, the occasion of it was, a great noise that was made about some ministers, who were said to be bringing in a new scheme of doctrine; because, in their sermons, they disused and censured several old approved words and phrases as too legal, and affected some new modes of speaking; and because they recommended the Marrow to their people. This book, says Mr. Willison, was laid before the assembly in 1720 as containing gross Antinomian errors; and, several propositions having been excerpted from it by a committee, the assembly proceeded in a hurry to pass a condemnatory act against them all *in cumulo.**

Ruf. The associate presbytery observe, that, while the Arminian doctrine, having been condemned by the synod of Dort, and by all the divines of any reputation for soundness in the faith, and being so directly contrary to the scripture doctrine contained in the Confessions of the reformed churches, few of the more serious and sober were misled by it; till at length a more refined and consequently a more dangerous scheme of Arminianism was vented in England, especially by Mr. Richard Baxter; a scheme, which, in the manner in which it was expressed, came nearer to the legal terms which had been used, for some time before, in explaining gospel truths by divines of reputation for orthodoxy; and therefore was more generally received by those of the Presbyterian persuasion in England; and gradually crept into many pulpits in Scotland.† Hence various phrases, which had not been much used by Calvin, Beza, and other reformers in the sixteenth century, but which sometimes occur in the writings of their successors in the next century, such as, that the covenant of grace is conditional to us; that christians are in a state of probation; that there are certain preparations which men ought to seek in order to their coming to Christ; were so much abused by the Arminians and Neonomians, that it became necessary either to lay aside the use of them, or to give such definitions of them as would scarcely appear correct, being rather adapted to the application of them in the discourses of sound divines, than suggested by the most proper use of the words. With regard to some

* Imp. Test. page 38.

† See the Introduction to the Act concerning the doctrine of grace.

of these phrases, the ministers, whom Mr. Willison alludes to, chose to follow the former method, rather than the latter. This they did, not from caprice, nor from any inclination to novelty; but because they found, that, as the case was circumstanced, the use of them, in stating the doctrine of the gospel, tended to error and confusion, rather than to that manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience, which is the aim and study of faithful ministers; and that, therefore, it appeared to be their duty to decline the use of them. To any candid person, who reads the Marrow with Mr. Boston's notes, and the answers to the twelve queries proposed by the commission of the general assembly; and who is also acquainted with the doctrine of our first reformers, it must be evident, that no new doctrine was advanced, nor even any novelty in the manner of expressing it, was affected by these ministers.

It is lamentable, indeed, to find any good man offering it as an excuse for an unjust act of the general assembly, that it was done in a hurry; while that court was obstinate in refusing to repeal it.

§. 34. *Alex.* The act of the general assembly, in 1720, charges the Marrow with asserting an universal redemption as to purchase.

Ruf. The associate presbytery shew, that there is no ground for bringing that charge against the Marrow; since it is manifestly the design of the whole treatise to teach, in opposition to the Arminians, that Christ, in his mediatorial undertaking, represented the elect only, and obeyed and suffered for none else. It is evident, that the passages of the Marrow quoted by the assembly, considered in connexion with the design of those parts of that treatise where they occur, will not bear the construction put upon them in that act.

The first is a passage of Luther on the epistle to the Galatians. "Then came the law, as it is the covenant of works, and said, I find "him, namely, Jesus Christ, a sinner, yea, such a one as hath taken "upon him the sins of all men." These words, as they are used in the Marrow, must be understood according to the foregoing words: "He put himself in the room and place of all the faithful:"—and according to the following words:—"And so the law set upon him and "killed him; and by this means was the justice of God fully satisfied, "his wrath appeased, and all true believers acquitted from all their "sins."*

The words of the next passage condemned by the assembly's act, which are these; "God the Father has made a deed of gift and "grant to all mankind, that whosoever of them all shall believe in his "Son, shall not perish but have everlasting life;" imply indeed, that there is a sufficiency of intrinsic value or merit in the sacrifice of Christ for the removal of all legal bars that stand in the way of men's salvation; and that Christ crucified is the ordinance of God for salvation to all mankind; in the use of which only they can be saved; and, consequently, that there is a full warrant to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation through Christ crucified to all the children of Adam; and for each of them to believe them with application to himself in particular.

As to the passage taken from Mr. Preston's treatise of faith. Go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven, that is, Go and tell every man without exception, that here is good news for him; Christ is dead for him: the obvious meaning is, Tell every man, that

* Marrow of Modern Divinity, chap. ii.

Christ is dead, is a crucified Christ, for him to come to and believe on; even as it might have been said to the manslayer of old, that the city of refuge was prepared and open for him to flee to, that he might be safe.

The design of the Marrow here is to teach, that there is a sufficient ground in the gospel for every man to be persuaded, that Christ is the gift of God for salvation to him in particular. This is quite contrary to the doctrine of the Arminians; who deny, that there is any ground in the free offer of the gospel for a person's having any persuasion of his own salvation in particular.

Since, then, it appears, that the passages of the Marrow, quoted in the assembly's act, cannot be understood as favouring universal redemption as to purchase, it will be obvious, that, under the misapplied title of universal redemption as to purchase, the assembly condemned the universal and unlimited offer of Christ to mankind sinners as such. The revelation of the Divine will in the word, making a gift of Christ to the world of mankind, and the sovereign grace, that has made this grant or deed of gift, not to devils, but to men, are much obscured, if not denied, by the acts of the assembly condemning some passages in the Marrow on this head.

Alex. Nobody denies, that Christ and his salvation are freely offered to the hearers of the gospel. But the associate presbytery and their followers call the gospel a deed of gift and grant, a promise, and even an absolute promise of Christ and of eternal life in him. This grant or promise, they say, is directed to sinners of mankind indefinitely in such a manner, as gives them a right or warrant to claim the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour: and their preachers use to call their hearers to claim him on that ground. Is not this, as Mr. Willison says, too loose and unguarded? What reasons do they give for such a way of preaching?

Ruf. They have many good reasons. They observe, that the scripture expressly asserts, *that a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven;** and therefore the receiving of Christ necessarily presupposes a giving of him; that is a revelation of him in the word, affording gospel-hearers as such a warrant to receive him. This grant or deed of gift, made to all mankind in the word, is the foundation of our faith; the ground and warrant, that ministers have, for preaching the gospel, and for making a full, free, and unhampered offer of Christ, of his righteousness and salvation to all, as Divine Providence affords them opportunity.

We have this grant in the express words of scripture. Christ says; *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish but have everlasting life.*† *My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven:* a word that is addressed to persons to whom he says at the same time, *Ye believe not.*‡ *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record, or testimony, which he gave concerning his Son.* Which testimony is this, *that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*‖ According to these texts, although the purchase and application of redemption be peculiar to the elect; yet the warrant to receive Christ is common to all, as they are sinful men and women of Adam's family: *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man.*§

* John iii. 27. † John iii. 16. ‡ John vi. 32 & 36. ‖ 1 John v. 10, 11. § Prov. viii. 4.

The giving mentioned in these texts is not to be understood of a giving unto possession, which is peculiar to them who believe. But it is such a giving to sinners by way of offer, as warrants them to receive the gift, or to take possession of it. As it behoved the manna to be given or rained down, before it could be tasted or fed upon; so God's giving his only begotten Son in the gospel is necessary in order to men's believing on him, that they may not perish, but have everlasting life. The persons, to whom this grant or offer is made, are not the elect only, but mankind considered as lost. For such is the record of God, that it warrants all to believe on the Son of God. But the offer of a gift to a certain select company of men can never be a warrant for all men to receive it or take possession of it. Men's unbelief lies in their not believing this record, viz. "that God hath given to us eternal "life." Unbelief doth not consist in a mere disbelieving of this proposition, that God hath given eternal life to the elect: for of this the most despairing unbeliever may be persuaded; and their belief of it adds to their torment. But their unbelief lies in this, that they make him a liar, in their not believing the record of God, even that he hath given *to them* eternal life in his Son Jesus Christ. Hereby they deny the faithfulness of God in that record; as if he were not in earnest in the gift which he makes of Christ to sinners as such in the gospel. They slight and despise the authority of the God of grace, commanding them to give the answer of a particular applying faith to the offer and call of his word. They deservedly perish in unbelief; since the kingdom and gift of God was brought near to them in the gospel, and they would not receive it; but treated it with contempt.

This grant of Christ, of his righteousness and salvation, is plainly set fourth in these passages of scripture which represent the gospel as a promise directed to all the hearers of the word. Acts ii. 39. *The promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call*; to as many as he shall call in the same manner in which he was now calling all Peter's hearers, that is, by the outward call of the word. Another text is that in Heb. iv. 1, 2. *Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it; for to us was the gospel preached as well as unto them.* Here it is evident, from the connecting particle *for* in verse 2d, that what is called the gospel or good news, is the promise of God's rest mentioned in verse 1st. Our privilege, in having the promise of the heavenly rest left or directed to us in the gospel, is similar to that of the Israelites in having had the promise of a temporal rest in the land of Canaan given to them; particularly in this respect, that we are liable through unbelief to fall short of the good of the promise, as they fell short of it. This is called an absolute promise, in opposition to the promise of the covenant of works; which was properly conditional; and in opposition to the scheme of the Arminians and Mr. Baxter formerly mentioned. If you allow the new covenant to be properly conditional to us, you allow it to be in effect a covenant of works; you adhere to the way of doing for life; whether the condition be faith and repentance, or sincere obedience, or faith only. Whereas the covenant of grace is exhibited to sinners in free promises of justification and salvation for the sake of him, whose name is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS: and this exhibition of

the new covenant is the gospel of the grace of God. Faith itself is a blessing contained in the gospel promise; and therefore, though it be a means of receiving the promise, and of our obtaining the possession of other promised blessings, yet it is not, in any proper sense, the condition of the promise, or the ground of our right or title to the promised blessings.

Alex. How is it consistent with the truth and faithfulness of God, for him to direct absolute promises of eternal life to those sinners, who according to his purpose are never to obtain it?

Ruf. The Seceders often say, These promises are to be considered two ways; either as they were made to Christ in the secret transaction of the everlasting covenant between the Father and him, to be, according to God's unchangeable decree, completely fulfilled in due time to all those who were given to Christ; or as they are directed to sinners indefinitely in the gospel dispensation.

In the last consideration of these promises, they are viewed as expressive of God's free offer to do according to the tenor of them to every one who embraces them by faith. Hence it appears, that, according to the doctrine of Seceders on this head, these promises, as they are exhibited in the gospel dispensation, in connexion with the call to believe them, or confide in them, belong to the revelation of God's will, with regard to the duty of sinners under that dispensation. So that your objection is just the same with that of the Arminians, who represent God's calling men to embrace the offer of grace and salvation, as inconsistent with his appointment of many of them in his decree to everlasting ruin. We answer this objection by observing that, in the gospel dispensation, there is a certain and infallible connexion declared, not between men's external privilege under that dispensation, or any efforts of their natural ability or free will, and their eventual attainment of any spiritual and saving blessing which God hath promised in the gospel; but between their real attainment of one of these blessings and their attainment in due time of all the rest. God's dealing with men in the gospel dispensation says, That he sincerely delights in the work of faith as agreeable to his commanding will; and in its connexion with all the other parts of the promised salvation; but does not at all say of any person, while he continues in his natural state, that it is God's purpose to give him in the event faith or salvation. I am convinced, that the doctrine of the associate presbytery on this head is the same with that of all true Calvinists in opposition to the Arminian error.

The Seceders allow the exhibition of Christ, of his righteousness and salvation in the gospel to perishing sinners, to be an offer; but in order to signify that this offer is most free, without money and without price, without any condition of moral good to be found in us, or done by us, in order to our belief or acceptance of it, they often choose to call it, agreeably to the language of scripture, an unconditional promise, a free gift or grant.

But another reason why the associate presbytery call the gospel offer a grant or promise of the righteousness and salvation of Christ is, the common interest, which the scripture represents sinners of mankind as having in him. They have a common interest in Christ, which the fallen angels have not, it being warrantable for them, and not for the

fallen angels, to take possession of Christ and his whole salvation. Hence, he is called *the Saviour of the world*, and his salvation is termed a *common salvation*. Jonah, in his prayer, said, *They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy.** The persons here spoken of, have no special or saving interest in Christ, whom they neglect for the sake of lying vanities; but they have a common interest in him as *their own mercy*. The evangelist John says of Christ, *He came to his own, and his own received him not.* Relations are mutual; and therefore, as they to whom Christ came, were his own, so he was their own: they had a common and external, though not a special and saving interest in him; while they did not receive him. To the same purpose, is the gracious declaration in the preface to the ten commandments, so often repeated in the books of Moses, and in other places of the Old Testament, *I am the Lord thy God.* The Lord said so to every person in the camp of Israel; and he is now saying so to every person in the visible church. Thus the gospel offer is called a free grant of the Saviour, as it gives those to whom it is made, a common interest in him; which is distinct from, and opposite to, that special and saving interest in him, which is attained by actual believing in him.

In fine, the associate presbytery represented the gospel offer as a free grant and promise of Christ and his salvation; because it is a proposal of Christ and his salvation to be received, not by working or performing any condition, but by believing; and therefore, the matter of the gospel offer must be something to be believed; and something which a person cannot truly believe without an application of it to himself: and such is the free grant and promise of Christ, now mentioned.

The tenets, rejected and condemned by the associate presbytery on this head, are these two: 1. That the free, unlimited and universal offer of Christ in the gospel, to sinners of mankind as such, is inconsistent with particular redemption; or that God the Father's making a deed of gift to all mankind, importing, that whosoever of them all shall believe on his Son, shall not perish, but have everlasting life, infers an universal atonement, or redemption as to purchase. 2. That this grant or offer is made to the elect only, or to such as have previous qualifications recommending them above others.

§ 35. *Alex.* Another charge in the act of the assembly against the Marrow, is, that it defines saving faith, as it corresponds with the gospel, to be a man's persuasion, that Christ is his; and that whosoever has not that persuasion, has not answered the gospel call, nor is a true believer. This is condemned by the assembly, as contrary to those passages of scripture and of the confession of faith, which teach, that assurance is not the essence of faith.

Ruf. The associate presbytery observe, that it will be obvious to any one, who shall carefully consider the places of scripture and passages of our confession and larger catechism, quoted by the assembly, that they speak of the assurance of sense or reflexion; that is, the certain knowledge which persons may attain of their having already believed, and of their being already in a state of grace, founded on the evidence of the marks given of that state in the word of God. But

* Jonah ii. 9.

this assurance of sense is very different from the assurance which the Marrow represents as belonging to the nature of justifying faith. It is one thing to be assured, that Christ is ours, that his righteousness and salvation are ours, on the single ground of the free promise of the gospel addressed to sinners; an assurance which belongs to the direct act of saving faith wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is another thing to be assured that Christ and his righteousness are ours, and his salvation ours, because we have found, upon impartial self-examination, that we have the scriptural characters of true believers, or of those that are Christ's. This is what the associate presbytery call the assurance of sense. It is by the direct act of faith that we know, that in the gospel God speaks pardon, peace and salvation to our souls, through the blood of Jesus Christ: but it is by spiritual sense and reflection, that we come to know, that he has actually begun that good work which he hath promised to fulfil in us.

The associate presbytery agreed with the Marrow in defining saving faith to be a persons real persuasion, that Jesus Christ is his; that he shall have life and salvation by Christ; and that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for him.

In the first place, it is here asserted that there is in justifying faith a person's real persuasion, "that Christ is his in particular." This is evident, from the consideration of the nature of justifying faith as effectual to the relief of the sinner who finds himself in particular bound under the curse. A man having only a general faith of the law, will easily rest in a general faith of the gospel, or of Christ's willingness and ability to save sinners, or to save them that come to him. But when one is brought to a faith of the law, as directed to, and condemning him in particular; his conscience cannot be satisfied, nor will it absolve him, or be purged from guilt, without a special faith of the gospel, or of the mercy of God in Christ, as reaching him in particular. Nor can a person's belief of the gospel be answerable to it, as it is a free grant of a Saviour, unless it be such a belief as includes a person's persuasion, that in virtue of that grant, he is warranted to take the Saviour to himself as his Saviour in particular. A person's faith is not answerable to the name of Christ proclaimed in the gospel without this appropriating persuasion. The Lord says to the whole visible church, I am the Lord your God: his name is the Lord our righteousnes; a light to the Gentiles; salvation unto the ends of the earth. The language of a person's faith corresponding to the Lord's name thus proclaimed, must be, He is the Lord my righteousness, my light, my salvation, my God. If we have nothing of this persuasion, we refuse to own him by that name by which he has revealed himself to us;—we deny his name. In the preface to the ten commandments, God makes over himself to sinners as their God and Redeemer, saying, to each of them to whom his word comes, I am the Lord thy God. And as all the commandments are directed to every one in particular; so the first requires every one to know and acknowledge the Lord to be his God and Redeemer. Our larger catechism, on this command, teaches us, that to trust in God is to know and acknowledge him, as our own God and Redeemer: and therefore, that there is no trusting in God without faith's persuasion of his being our God: no trusting in Christ without faith's persuasion,

that Christ is our Saviour. It may be added, that this appropriation accords with the covenant relation between Christ and the whole visible church, which is commonly set forth under the similitude of a marriage relation. When God says, I am married unto you; the answer of faith is, *Ishi*, my husband. When God says, it is my people; the answer of faith is, the Lord is my God. Such is the profession of the visible church; and true faith is the persuasion of the heart answerable to that profession.

In the second place, it is here asserted, that a man's justifying faith has in it a persuasion, "that he shall have life and salvation by Christ."* Without this persuasion, in some measure, we have no true faith; for it is the same thing with believing on the Son, or resting on him for salvation. None can trust in him or rest on him for salvation without some degree of persuasion, that they shall have life and salvation by him, from sin as well as from wrath. Without this persuasion, we do not set to our seal that God is true in his promise and record concerning his Son; nor do we give any suitable answer to his call, Look unto me and be saved. Accordingly, we find the saints in scripture, using the language of this persuasion in the profession of their faith, Acts xv. 11, *We believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved.*

In the third place, it is asserted, that a man's justifying faith hath in its persuasion, "that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of "mankind, he did it for him." This branch of the persuasion of faith is affirmed by the apostle when he says, *I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* It is certain, that what Christ did for the redemption of mankind, was his obedience unto death in their stead, or the surety righteousness which, as the second Adam, he fulfilled for us, and for the sake of which the Lord is well pleased. This perfect righteousness is brought near to every one of us in the gospel, even to the stout-hearted and far from righteousness, and is laid in Zion as the foundation of our acceptance with God, and of our hope of eternal salvation:† and therefore, our persuasion, that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for us, in connexion with the former parts of this definition, enters into the nature of that faith which answers the free grant and promise of Christ in the word. I may add, that the persuasion, which is here aserted to belong to a person's justifying faith, is not his believing that Christ died intentionally for him in particular; this faith being the same, on the matter, with the belief of his election; which belief, however attainable it be, cannot belong to faith as justifying.‡ But when Christ, with his whole salvation, is applied by faith upon the ground of the gospel offer and call; then, whatsoever he did for

* With regard to this persuasion, it is obvious from the connexion here, that it is not to be understood of a persuasion respecting abstract or doctrinal propositions only; but of a persuasion respecting also a grant or promise, which is embraced not only with the understanding as true, but with the heart as good.

† Isaiah xlvi. 12, 13—xxviii. 16.

‡ For justifying faith is not a persuasion that God from eternity decreed our justification by the righteousness of Christ; but it is a persuasion of two things: First, that his righteousness is sufficient to be our justifying rightcousness; and secondly, That there is such a grant of it in the gospel as warrants us now to present it to God, and to rest on it as our only justifying righteousness.

the redemption of mankind, actually terminates on the person, and is believed so to do.

Wherefore, when we consider this as the plea of justifying faith, that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for me; the meaning is not, for me by a foregoing purpose and intention; but for me, as issuing in the present grant of it to me, which I now cordially embrace.

Alex. The associate presbytery reckoned the common interest, that all sinners under the gospel dispensation have in Christ, a ground upon which a person should believe his own special interest in him. Is not this unreasonable? How can a common interest in any person or thing become a special interest by believing it to be so.

Ruf. A simile may serve to shew that such an improvement of a common interest is not so strange or so contrary to the common sense of mankind, as it has been represented. Suppose, that a king makes a proclamation of indemnity to a number of rebels; and that they have all the same common interest in it: does not this common interest give every one of these rebels a ground so to believe a special interest in it for himself in particular, as to accept of the indemnity, and to get the benefit of it; while the rebel, who does not believe that he has any interest in the indemnity, supposing, that whatever it may be to others, it is no indemnity to him; persists in his rebellion, and perishes? So the gospel is a proclamation of God's grant of pardon and salvation to sinners through Jesus Christ. All sinners, to whom this proclamation is made, have a common interest in it. Any sinner, who truly believes this common interest, is thereby led to believe that there is pardon and salvation through Jesus Christ for him in particular; and to trust in the indemnity proclaimed for pardon and salvation accordingly. Whereas, they who disbelieve a common interest in this indemnity, also disbelieve a special interest in it; and so perish in their sins. Again, suppose a gift of suitable provisions to be presented to a number of persons ready to perish with hunger. All these persons have a common interest in the provisions by virtue of the gift; and each of them has hereby a ground for such a belief of his own interest in the provisions presented to them, as may effectually determine him to take and eat, as his case requires; and by such a belief, he has a farther, a special interest in the provisions; an interest in them which he could not have, while he disbelieved the truth of the gift, and despised the provisions. Thus, God the Father makes a free grant and promise of Christ to all the hearers of the gospel: he says, I give you the true bread from Heaven. This free grant warrants any poor sinner, who hears the gospel, to appropriate to himself by faith, Christ Jesus and all his saving benefits. This appropriation of Christ crucified, as the suitable food of our souls, corresponds with the external acts of eating and drinking what is necessary for our bodily refreshment. In this appropriation, we believe a special interest in Jesus Christ as ours; we are persuaded, that he is so ours, that we shall have life and salvation by him; and we take to ourselves whatever he did for the redemption of mankind, as done for us. This appropriating faith is not a belief, that we are among those whom God, of his mere good pleasure, chose from eternity to everlasting life, or for whom Christ intentionally laid down

his life; but it is a belief, that Christ crucified, is now given to us in the gospel to be our Saviour, our righteousness and salvation; and, in believing, we receive him as given to us, and trust in him for our justification and salvation accordingly.

Alex. These brethren might have been satisfied with the definition of faith which is given in our shorter catechism.

Ruf. There was no member of the associate presbytery, who did not highly approve that definition; but they judge, that it is greatly perverted and abused, when it is set in opposition to the definitions expressive of the appropriation of faith, that had been received before by the reformed church of Scotland: such as, that in the answer of the Palatine catechism to the question, What is true faith? "It is," says that excellent summary of christian doctrine, "not only a knowledge "by which I steadfastly assent to all things, which God hath revealed "to us in his word; but also an assured affiance, kindled in my heart "by the Holy Spirit, by which I rest upon God, making sure account, "that forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and life, are be-"stowed not only upon others, but also upon me; and that freely by "the mercy of God for the merit of Christ alone." In the famous Mr. James Melvil's catechism, we have the following answer to the same question: "It is my sure belief, that God both may and will "save me in the blood of Jesus Christ; because he is Almighty, and "has promised to do so."

We are to understand the definition of faith in the shorter catechism, according to the account of it in the larger. These words of the former, "*Christ Jesus, as he is offered in the gospel,*" are equivalent to the following words of the latter; "*Christ and his righteous-"ness, held forth in the promise of the gospel.*"* The act of faith by which we are said, in the shorter catechism, "*to receive and rest "upon Christ for salvation,*" is said, in the larger catechism, to be our believing "*application of Christ crucified, and all the benefits of "his death to ourselves.*"† The faith, by which we say Amen, in prayer, is said to be that "*which relies upon him, that he will fulfil "our requests;*" and it is "*an assurance of our being heard.*"‡ And as this faith is necessary to acceptable prayer, it must be found, in a greater or less measure, in all true believers.||

It is evident then, that according to the doctrine of our confession and catechisms, the receiving of Christ, as he is offered to us in the gospel, is just our believing application of him to ourselves, as freely given to us in the gospel promise; and that our resting on him alone for our salvation, is our real persuasion, on the ground of that promise, that he is, and will be, that to us, which he is declared to be in the gospel; the propitiation for our sins, the Lord our righteousness, the Lord our strength, our light and salvation. The words of the answer in the shorter catechism to the question, What is faith in Jesus Christ, have been used in a sense quite opposite to that of the Westminster assembly. Thus, according to some, our receiving Christ, as he is offered to us in the gospel, is our consenting to the terms, upon which the gospel, as they suppose, offers or promises salvation, namely,

* Larg. Cat. quest. 72. † Idem. quest. 170.

‡ Idem. quest. 196—Short. quest. 107. || Larg. Cat. quest. 72, 170, 196.

faith, repentance and sincere obedience; together with our purposing and promising, through Divine grace, to fulfil these terms. Our resting on Christ, according to this plan, is our trusting that he will save us, if we persevere in endeavouring to fulfil these terms. According to this construction, not only Neonomians, but even Arminians and Socinians will subscribe to the definition of faith in the shorter catechism. Accordingly, the Socinian reviser of the shorter catechism, mentioned in a former conversation, who altered most of the answers of that catechism, left this definition untouched.

Alex. The notion that many entertain of Christ's having died for them, is nothing but gross presumption and delusion.

Ruf. Such is the conceit which many have, that Christ is their Saviour, and that he died for them, founded upon an opinion of Christ's having died intentionally for all men; or of their good qualifications, as giving them a title to the benefit of his death; or upon some flattering imaginations or unaccountable feelings. But this is quite different from the appropriating faith taught from the scriptures, by the associate presbytery, as we have already seen in the course of our conversation; a faith which, as the twelve ministers, who protested against the act of the general assembly condemning the Marrow, observe, "is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, shewing us that "Christ, his righteousness and salvation are brought near to us in "the promise and offer of the gospel; clearing, at the same time, our "right and warrant to intermeddle withal, without fear of vicious "intromission, encouraging and enabling us to some measure of con-"fident application, and taking home all to ourselves freely, without "money and without price."

The associate presbytery, in speaking of the description of faith in the Marrow, observe, "that it exhibits the scriptural order in which "faith closes *with* or *appropriates* its object. For the first thing that "we have to believe, or to be persuaded of, upon the ground of the "grant that God has made of Christ to mankind-sinners in the word, "is, *that Christ is ours.* Upon which there will follow, according to "the measure of faith, a persuasion, that we shall have life and sal-"vation by him; and that whatsoever he did for the redemption of "mankind, he did it for us."

These ministers, in order to guard their hearers against presumption, used to warn them against resting in a partial and superficial application of Christ or the promises; as when persons content themselves with speculative notions of Christ, without spiritual, heart-affecting views of his glory and suitableness to their case: or, when they pretend to receive him in one of his offices, and not in the rest; in his priestly office, for example, and not in his prophetical and kingly offices: or, when they pretend to believe and embrace the promises, without any view of them as in Christ, in whom they are all yea and amen; or to believe some of them with application to themselves, while they neglect and despise others, that are equally necessary and suitable to their case; or while they have no humbling sense of their ignorance, enmity and inability in themselves to make a believing application of Christ, or the promises in him; no humbling sense of their absolute need of the Holy Spirit to seal and apply the promises to their souls.

Alex. How comes it, that their manner of speaking about saving faith is so different from that of many sound divines, such as Flavel, Durham, and others.

Ruf. Probably the difference is more in words, than in the matter. I have not found any orthodox divines, who, in speaking of these words of Christ, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* or in explaining such applicatory expressions of the Psalmist as these; *Thou art my God, my Shepherd, my light and my salvation*, do not allow them to be the language of faith; and that even in opposition to sense or feeling.

Alex. They mean, that such a claim belongs to a high degree of saving faith; not to the essence of it.

Ruf. It seems plain, that saving faith, in all the various degrees of it, proceeds upon the same ground; and therefore, the language of it must be such as that of the expressions now mentioned, if it be founded on a promise or grant of Christ and of God in him: whereas, if it be founded on some speculative or doctrinal proposition only, it can never, even in its highest degree, of itself, or in its direct act, speak any such language: for such a proposition, if it imply no grant or promise, affords a person no warrant to appropriate or take to himself what is spoken of. When a historical relation of the riches of Peru is read or heard, a person, who has the strongest belief of the truth of that relation, is as far from any application of these riches to his personal use, as one who is doubtful of it. The truth is, the language of a high degree of saving faith is more distinct, more steady, and unfaultering; but is, in reality, the same applicatory language with that of the weakest unfeigned faith.

On this head, the associate presbytery charge the acts of the general assembly, concerning the Marrow, with three tenets, which they reject and condemn. The first is, That it is not necessary to constitute saving and justifying faith, to have any persuasion in the heart, that Christ is ours; that we shall have life and salvation by him; and that whatever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for us. The second is, That no other persuasion is necessary to constitute justifying faith, than a belief and persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, and of Christ's ability and willingness to save all that come to him: this being such a faith as Papists and Arminians can subscribe to in consistency with their other errors and heresies. The third is, That one must *first* come to Christ and be a true believer, *before* he can appropriate Christ and the whole of his salvation to himself, upon scripture ground and warrant: a notion which subverts the true nature of faith.

§ 36. *Alex.* The assembly charge the Marrow more directly with Antinomianism, when they represent it as teaching, that holiness is not necessary to salvation; as in these words: "If the law say, good "works must be done, and the commandment be kept, if thou wilt "obtain salvation; then answer thou, and say, I am already saved, "before thou camest; therefore, I have no need of thy presence. "Christ is my righteousness, my treasure, and my work. I confess, "O law, that I am neither godly nor righteous; but this I am sure of, "that he is godly and righteous for me." And, in the act passed in the year 1722, they allege, that their construction of these words of

the Marrow, is strengthened by the words that follow in the same place: "*For in Christ I have all things at once, neither need I any "thing more that is necessary to salvation.*" Then, added they in that act, it follows, that personal holiness, and good works, and perseverance in holy obedience to the law of God, are not (in this author's opinion) necessary to salvation; and a man may have all things necessary to salvation, though he be not yet a godly man.

Ruf. The associate presbytery cordially acknowledge and maintain, that holiness and good works are, in their own place, necessary as an acknowledgment of God's sovereign authority by our obedience to his command; necessary as being the end of our election, redemption and effectual calling; necessary as being expressions of our gratitude, and as the promotion of them is a principal design of the word and ordinances; necessary for making our calling and election sure; and necessary, according to our confession of faith, as, being "done in obe- "dience to God's commands, they are fruits and evidences of a true "and lively faith; and as by them believers manifest their thankful- "ness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the pro- "fession of the gospel, stop the mouths of adversaries, and glorify "God."

In these and the like respects, the author of the Marrow nowhere denies, but often plainly asserts and inculcates the necessity of holiness and good works. The words, which you have recited as condemned by the assembly, and which had been taken from a sermon of the great reformer Martin Luther, were never censured before by any protestant church. They express the perfection and extent of Christ's active obedience in our room, answering the law-charge against the believer, while he is, in the eye of the law, neither godly nor righteous in himself. As the believer has no plea, in answer to the law's demand of satisfaction to justice for sin, but the sufferings of Jesus Christ our surety; so he has no plea, in answer to the law's demand of perfect obedience, for entitling him to eternal life, but Christ's complete holiness of nature and righteousness of life, which are imputed to the sinner in the moment of believing, for his justification in the sight of God; and consequently, this answer, *Christ is godly and righteous for me*, is the only one which the believer can give to the law's demand of good works. Rom. iv. 5, *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly; his faith is counted to him for righteousness.* "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth; "not for any thing wrought in them or done by them; but by imput- "ing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them."* So that if we have recourse, in the least, to our personal holiness as the ground, in whole or in part, of our enjoyment of grace here or of glory hereafter, we dishonour both the law and the lawgiver, and make our personal holiness a rival with the Son of God, by seeking to divide the glory of our salvation between it and him.

Alex. Was it not a strange opinion that was advanced by the defenders of the Marrow, that, in the gospel, properly so taken, there are no precepts, not even the commands of faith and repentance? Such a manner of expression seems to be, as the assembly represented it, of a pernicious tendency.

* Confess. chap. xi. § 1.

Ruf. If the gospel be taken *largely*, says the associate presbytery, that is, for a system of all the doctrines, promises, precepts, threatenings and histories, which in any way concern man's recovery and salvation; then, no doubt, all the precepts which belong to, or are deducible from the law of the ten commands, are contained in it. Many of these precepts, however, such as those of faith and repentance, having a manifest connexion with the entrance of sin, could not be promulgated, before the gospel was revealed. But then all these precepts are reducible to those of the ten commands; though they had no due and proper objects, no occasion of being exercised, in an innocent state. And therefore, if the gospel be taken *strictly and properly*, as it is contra-distinct from the law, it is a promise, containing glad tidings of a Saviour, with grace, mercy and salvation in him to lost sinners of Adam's family. Thus there are no precepts in the gospel, taken in its *strict and proper* sense, as it is contra-distinct from the law; for all precepts, those of faith and repentance not excepted, belong to the law; which, according to the nature of it, being a perfect and complete rule of all internal as well as external obedience, must oblige us to the new duty, as soon as the gospel reveals the new object. And therefore, since the Lord was pleased to reveal his grace and good will in the gospel, faith and repentance are required in the law, as well as other good works. They are among the duties required in the first commandment according to our larger catechism.* Besides, if the law does not bind sinners to believe and repent; then faith and repentance, considered as works, would enter into the ground of our justification before God; for the works excluded by the scripture from the ground of our justification before God, are no other than the works of the law; or works of obedience to the law. Wherefore if faith and repentance are not works of the law, they are not excluded from, but must belong to the grounds of our pardon and acceptance with God. The supposition that the commands to believe and repent are precepts of the gospel, not contained in the law, is the foundation of the Neonomian error, which teaches that another righteousness, agreeable to the new law of the gospel, in our own persons, besides the righteousness of Christ, is necessary, as the immediate ground of our acceptance and confidence before God. Nay, this doctrine leads to Pelagian universal grace; for if there be a new law, which was not given to Adam in innocency, Adam never lost that grace by which the new law is to be obeyed; and then it was necessary, that he, who, according to this opinion, gave a new law to mankind, should give new universal grace, by which men might be in a capacity to obey it. For it is not consistent with the justice of God, to suppose, that he gives a law to men, which he never gave them any ability to obey.

Alex. Mr. Willison owns, as I observed before, that the act condemning the Marrow in 1720, was done in a hurry. But then he says, when the assembly in 1722 came to review and explain these hasty acts, they did justice to truth, and declared their minds, concerning the acts and propositions quarrelled, in very orthodox terms.† But afterwards, in his appendix, he candidly confesses, that, having read the act of assembly of 1722 again, and upon second thoughts, he will not say, it is so well worded as could be wished; or that the word *causality*

* Quest. 104, 105. † Imp. Test. page 89.

is fit to be used in asserting the necessity of holiness to salvation. But he adds, I verily believe that the meaning of the assembly was sound, and their intentions good, viz. to disapprove every opinion or expression, that tended any way to slacken our obligation to the study of holiness.

Ruf. The title of the assembly's act in 1722, was "an act confirming and explaining the act of 1720;" a title which shews, that if injustice was done to truth by the act of 1720, it was established by that which was passed 1722. Mr. Willison ought to have given this title, and ought to have owned, that the assembly, disregarding the petition and representation of a number of honest ministers, who asked nothing but justice, obstinately refused to repeal, or to retract one sentence of their unrighteous act. He ought also to have owned, that the words, *federal conditionality*, were as unfit to be used in asserting the necessity of holiness to salvation, as the word *causality*. Mr. Willison owns, that the act in 1722 was not so well worded, as could be wished. On this expression, one of the twelve representers remarks, that these acts are, in their words, opposite to what the Spirit of God calls *the word of the truth of the gospel*. The same minister observes on Mr. Willison's saying, "that he truly believed, that the assembly's meaning was sound, and their intention good; namely, to disapprove every opinion or expression that tended to slacken our obligation to the study of holiness;" that here is a broad insinuation of the same calumny, which Papists, and all other legalists, raise against the doctrine of free grace reigning through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life; that it is a doctrine of licentiousness; a charge from which the apostle Paul found himself obliged to defend his doctrine.* But what says Mr. Willison of the associate presbytery's opinion of that act?

Alex. He says, it was a harsh censure, for which those brethren had no just ground. The act in 1722, declares, "that what they had asserted in their former act, just now mentioned, concerning the necessity of holiness for obtaining everlasting happiness, was meant only of obtaining the possession and enjoyment of happiness, and not of the right and title to it; and that it is dangerous to assert, that holy obedience is not a federal and conditional means, or that it has no kind of causality in order to the obtaining of glory; as it seems to exclude all usefulness and influence of holy obedience, in order of means towards the possession of heaven." The associate presbytery, in their act concerning the doctrine of grace, declare, that the assembly, by expressing themselves in this manner, opened a wide door for Arminian and Socinian errors to overflow the church and land.†

Ruf. Mr. Willison ought to have shewn the insufficiency of the associate presbytery's reasons for censuring the assembly's act in 1722. The presbytery disapproved the assembly's asserting, "That we are to obtain the possession and enjoyment of everlasting happiness, though not a right and title to it, by a holy life; and that obedience is a federal and conditional means, or that it has a kind of causality in order to the obtaining of glory." 1. Because the obedience of believers cannot be the previous condition of their possession of salvation; since they have already begun to possess it. *By grace ye are saved,*

* Rom. vi. 1. † Imp. Test. page 215.

not of works. *He hath saved us, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life;* in the beginning and first fruits of it as well as in the title to it.* 2. Because the assembly's act, which we now speak of, teaches, that though we obtain the right to heaven or eternal life by Christ's obedience; we obtain the possession of it by our own doing or personal holiness. But the scripture teaches us very differently, assuring us, that we obtain salvation itself, as well as a title to it, by our Lord Jesus Christ; that in him we obtain the inheritance itself; and that he hath obtained eternal redemption itself for us.† Some have understood the apostle's words in 1 Corinth. ix. 24, *So run, that ye may obtain;* as if he meant, that our running is the procuring cause *or condition of our obtaining the incorruptible crown.* But the word used in the original signifies to receive or apprehend. By this race, christians go to receive a crown, the possession of which is already secured to them by the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the promise, which is yea and amen in him. This crown is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.‡ 3. Because the act of the assembly, asserting the necessity of our own personal holiness as a federal and conditional means, and as having some kind of causality in order to the obtaining of glory, makes our personal obedience a federal or proper condition upon which the obtaining of eternal glory is suspended. This is just the Neonomian scheme, propagated by Mr. Baxter and others; according to which scheme, the gospel of Christ is a new law prescribing faith, repentance and sincere obedience as the condition, by the performance of which eternal life is to be obtained. This scheme is just a new edition of the covenant of works: according to which new edition, a man's own obedience is still as much the immediate ground of his hope of eternal life, as it was according to the old. This is altogether inconsistent with the opposition which the apostle states between justification by the works of the law and justification by faith; for, according to that opposition, the causal influence of our own personal obedience, which obtains in the former, is entirely excluded from the latter.|| When our own obedience is thus admitted as having the causality of a federal condition in order to eternal glory, the assembly's saying in the same act, *that our obedience does not found our title to that good before the Lord,* must either be understood otherwise than according to the common use of the words, or be allowed to be a gross inconsistency: For the causality of a federal condition is no other than that of its founding a title to the benefit, which has been promised upon that condition.

Alex. How can this expression, *that our own obedience does not found our title to eternal life before the Lord,* be understood otherwise, than according to the common use of the words?

Ruf. The assembly, consistently with their ascribing the causality of a federal condition to our own obedience, might allow, that our obedience does not found our title to eternal life in respect of *proper merit.* Even the Papists and Arminians do not assert, that men are entitled to eternal life by the proper and intrinsic merit of their

* Ephes. ii. 8. 2 Tim. i. 9. Tit. iii. 5. † Thessal. v. 9. Eph. i. 11. Heb. ix. 12.

‡ Rom. vi. 23. || Rom. iii. 27, 28. iv. 4, 5. xi. 6.

obedience; or otherwise than in virtue of a promise, which, they say, God hath given them, of eternal life upon the condition of their sincere obedience.

Alex. Mr. Willison observes, that the assembly limits the sense in which they disapprove this assertion, "That holy obedience is "not a federal or conditional mean, nor has any kind of causality "in order to the attaining of glory;" when they add these words: "As this assertion seems to exclude all usefulness and influence "of holy obedience, in order of means, towards the possession of "Heaven."*

Ruf. There is nothing in these words against the construction which the associate presbytery put upon the preceding words of the act. For the assembly's saying, "that our obedience is among the means "towards the possession of Heaven," is no proof, that they do not hold our obedience to be, in a proper sense, a federal condition of eternal life. Because every federal condition is a mean; though every mean is not a federal condition. Nay, the assembly's assertion is made nothing better, but rather worse, by this addition; as it seems to imply, that the obedience of believers, unless it were necessary or useful in relation to eternal glory, as a federal cause or condition of it, would not be necessary at all, or it would be useless; a reproach which is commonly in the mouths of Papists, Arminians, and other opposers of the doctrine of justification by free grace, through the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

Alex. Mr. Willison complains, that the associate presbytery were uncharitable in asserting, that the assembly advanced opinions contrary to the doctrine of grace in that very act wherein the assembly profess a close adherence to our standards with respect to that doctrine.

Ruf. And are we not uncharitable in charging Servetus, Episcopius, Limborch and others, with advancing so many opinions in their writings, contrary to the doctrine of grace? For they professed as close an adherence to the supreme standard of that doctrine, as the assembly professed to the subordinate standards of the church of Scotland. But the regard due to the assembly's profession was greatly diminished by the use they made of their power in censuring honest ministers for maintaining the genuine doctrine of these subordinate standards, and in screening others from censure, who were guilty of undermining that doctrine.

Alex. Mr. Willison asserts, that the brethren of the associate presbytery did not openly complain of that act, at the passing of it in 1722. But as Mr. Ralph Erskine, in the appendix to his *Faith no Fancy*, has published a copy of the protestation which was entered by twelve ministers against that act, upon the passing of it, *and* avers that it was printed at Edinburgh in the same year; (and his testimony, as far as I know, was never contradicted:) this may be allowed to be a slip of Mr. Willison's memory. However, I make no great account of this dispute about causality and federal conditions, and the like uncouth words or phrases.

* Impart. Test. page 215.

Ruf. The apostle warns us to avoid strifes of words.* Yet, he also enjoins us to shew, in our doctrine, *sound speech, that cannot be condemned*,† and to *hold fast the form of sound words*.‡ Hence, there are cases, in which the use of an expression or phrase ought to be condemned and testified against; particularly, when it has been long and commonly used, not to express any truth, but only some dangerous error; and when those who use such an expression or phrase, refuse to join with others in the condemnation of a well-known, dangerous and spreading error as thereby expressed. Public teachers, who deal much in such phrases or expressions, are liable to the censure passed by the synod at Jerusalem on some who taught the Gentile converts the necessity of circumcision; namely, that they troubled the people of God with words, subverting their souls.‖ I cannot help thinking, that they are liable to this charge, who use this expression; that men's own obedience is a federal or conditional mean; and has some kind of causality, in order to the attaining of eternal glory. This act of the general assembly of the church of Scotland, among other steps of defection, prepared the way for the appearance in that church of such a gross Socinian as Dr. M'Gill, who describes the covenant of grace "as consisting in the doctrine which Jesus taught, obedience "to which, with repentance and a virtuous life, are the terms and con-"ditions of salvation."§

I shall only add on this head, that the associate presbytery condemned three tenets contained in those acts of the assembly: The first is, That the gospel, strictly taken, is a new, proper and preceptive law with a sanction, binding to faith, repentance and the other duties which are consequential to the revelation of the grace of God in the gospel of Christ. The second is, That though the righteousness of Christ alone founds our title to eternal glory, yet our personal holiness, or our own obedience to the new law, is the condition upon which we obtain the possession of it. The third is, That our personal holiness or good works, have a causal influence upon our eternal salvation, and are a federal and conditional mean of it; all which are contrary to the scriptures, and to our confession and larger catechism.

§ 37. *Alex.* The assembly's act in 1720, charges the Marrow with teaching, that the believer is not under the law as a rule of life; because it asserts, that as the law is a covenant of works, the believer is wholly and altogether set free from it; set free from its commanding and condemning power: and because, according to the Marrow, a believer is to yield obedience to the law of Christ, not only without respect to what the law of works promises or threatens; but also, without respect to what the law of Christ promises or threatens.

Ruf. It is very remarkable, that the last sentence you have recited, instead of proving that the law is not a rule of life to the believer, asserts the direct contrary in the strongest manner; viz. That the believer should regard the law of Christ as the rule of his life, and yield entire obedience to it, though it were without any promise or

* 1 Tim. vi. 4. † Tit. ii. 8. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 13. ‖ Acts xv. 24.

§ Dr. M'Gill's Practical Essay on the Death of Christ, as quoted in page 86 of an Overture, published in 1792, by a committee of the associate synod of Glasgow.

threatening. The truth is, the author, in this passage, is not treating of the rule, but of the motives of the believer's obedience; and it may occur, afterwards, when we come to consider the assembly's charge against the Marrow, with regard to these motives. As to the assertion, that believers are wholly set free from the law as a covenant of works, it is the doctrine of the apostle Paul; who says to the believing Romans, *Ye are not under the law; ye are become dead to the law through the body of Christ.** The believer is not under the condemning power of the law; because he is delivered from the curse of it. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law: and there is no condemnation to any that are in him. Nor can believers be under its commanding power: for its commanding and condemning power, in the case of transgression, are inseparable. It curses all who, being under its commanding power, do not continue to do all that it commands.† If the commands of the law as a covenant, were perfectly fulfilled by Jesus Christ as the surety for his people, then they are not under its commanding power:—It has nothing to require of them; as it has received from him all that they owed it. "Christ crucified," said Charnock, "not only disarmed the law of its "thunders, but defaced the obligation of it, as a covenant, and as it "were, ground the stones upon which it was written into powder."‡ So our confession of faith and larger catechism teach, that true believers are delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works.‖ As this expression of the Marrow is a precious truth in itself; so the manifest import of it is quite contrary to the assembly's purpose. They quote it to prove, that the author holds believers not to be under the law as a rule of life: whereas, his asserting that believers are delivered from the law, as it is a covenant of works, necessarily implies that they are under it in another respect: and in what respect the author holds them to be still under it, candour would teach us to hear himself, while he abundantly teaches, that they are under it, as it is the law of Christ, and a rule of life.

Alex. The assembly, in their explaining and confirming act in 1722, declare, that when they produced these words of the Marrow, as a part of the proof against the author, of his maintaining this erroneous tenet, that the law is not a rule of life to believers, they apprehended that he understood by the covenant of works, the moral law, strictly and properly taken; "as it appears he does," say they, "in other "places of his book, as particularly in page 7, he says, That indeed "the law of works signifies the moral law; and the moral law, strictly "and properly taken, signifies the covenant of works."

Ruf. But how could the assembly apprehend, that this expression of the author would answer their purpose of proving that he denies the law to be a rule of life to believers; unless they apprehended, (what no one, who reads the Marrow with a reasonable degree of attention, can apprehend,) that the law as it is a covenant of works, and the law as a rule of life, in this book, mean the same thing; while the author declares, as expressly as he can do, that they mean different

* Rom. vi. 14—vii. 4. † Gal. iii. 13, 10. Rom. viii. 1.

‡ Charnock, vol. ii. page 531.

‖ Westm. Confess. chap. xix. art. 6. Larger Catechism, quest. 37.

things, and is very particular in shewing the difference between the one and the other? The author says, that the moral law, strictly and properly taken, signifies the covenant of works; because, as Mr. Boston observes, the moral law, signifying the law of manners, answers to the scripture term *the law of works*, by which is meant the covenant of works. So the answer to the 93d question of the larger catechism is a strict and proper definition of the covenant of works: from which that catechism in the answer to question 97th asserts, that believers are delivered so as to be thereby neither justified nor condemned; that is, they are neither under the command of it to be justified, nor under the threatening of it to be condemned. Thus these answers of the larger catechism are as much reproached by the assembly's acts, as the passages they quote from the Marrow.

Alex. The assembly declared, that in censuring these expressions of the Marrow, it was not the meaning or intention of their act to insinuate, that believers in Christ are under the law as a covenant of works, or that they are obliged to seek justification by their own obedience.

Ruf. The associate presbytery justly censure the assembly, for making these two propositions one and the same; viz. That believers in Christ are not under the law as a covenant of works; and that they are not obliged to seek justification by their own obedience. The proper form of the covenant of works was man's obligation to perfect obedience as the condition of life; for as our shorter catechism expresses it, God entered into that covenant of life with man, upon condition of perfect obedience:—Whereas, his being obliged to seek justification and life by his obedience is not the proper form, but a consequence of it; and even such a consequence, as does not seem necessary to the fulfilment of it. For, if Adam had performed the obedience required, he would have been justified; though he had not aimed at his own justification by it; but only at the glory of God. And though he was to have life by or for his obedience, yet he could never seek or claim life by it, till he had performed it perfectly. If the two propositions before-mentiond be, as the assembly represent them, equivalent or the same, then the believer is no otherwise freed from the covenant of works since he believed, than he was before; for then, being under the outward dispensation of the gospel, he was as little obliged to seek justification by his own obedience, as he is now. Nay, the believer is no more delivered from the law as a covenant of works, than the unbeliever; who is as little obliged to seek justification by his own obedience as the believer is. On this supposition, all men, especially such as are under the outward dispensation of the gospel, are delivered from the command of the law as a covenant of works; because none of them are obliged to seek justification by their own obedience. And if they be not under the command of the covenant of works, how can they be under the curse, or the condemning power of it? But the truth is, though the law or covenant of works be broken, it is perpetually binding: and though the sinner be an insolvent debtor, yet the debt, both of obedience and satisfaction, lies upon his head. This is the sinner's case as long as he is under the law, and not under grace, through union to Christ the second Adam, who came to pay that double debt—a debt from which

true believers alone are free, through the imputation of his law-fulfilling and justice-satisfying righteousness to them.

Alex. Many, supposing, as the assembly does, that the two propositions before mentioned are equivalent or the same, think the assertion, that men in their natural state are under the commanding power of the covenant of works, is inconsistent with their situation under the external dispensation of the covenant of grace.

Ruf. The proper form of the commanding power of the law as a covenant of works, lies in the connexion between personal obedience and eternal life. The law is still saying, *The man that doeth these things, shall live in them. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* This connexion still stands in the law under which the natural man is detained by his unbelief. Hence, he is still under an obligation to that perfect obedience which has this life promised to it. This is an obligation on fallen men not to seek justification by their own obedience, but to despair of it, and to expect nothing by the broken law, which they are under, but condemnation and death, according to the sentence of that law. Men's being under the commanding power of the law as a covenant, accords well with their obligation under the gospel dispensation to seek justification and life by the righteousness of Christ: for on account of the inviolable connexion necessarily implied in this commanding power between perfect obedience and eternal life, fallen men can have no good hope of justification and life but by a righteousness which answers the law's demand of perfect obedience, as well as that of a satisfaction for sin; and as they have no righteousness of their own, the commanding power of the law-covenant shuts them up to seek justification by the righteousness of Christ, which is revealed in the gospel as answering both these demands. Nay, since the commanding power of the law-covenant acquiesces in the righteousness of Christ, as completely answering its demands, the same commanding power may well be considered as binding the sinner to acquiesce in that righteousness revealed in the gospel. So much indeed is implied in the threatening of the law against unbelief: *He that believeth not, shall be damned.*

Alex. Some think that men, in their natural state, cannot now be said to be under the law as a covenant of works; because, they say, as the covenant of works was made with Adam, the condition of it, in the strict and proper sense of the words, was no other than abstinence from the forbidden fruit; which is never proposed as the condition of life to the rest of mankind.

Ruf. The condition of the covenant of works is that which entitles those who perform it to eternal life, and renders those who violate it liable to eternal misery. Now, to suppose that this condition, in the strict and proper sense of the word, was only abstinence from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, without including any requisition of love to God, or of man for his sake; or as if the penalty was not to be incurred by any other sin, than that of the external act of violating that abstinence, is a most absurd supposition; contrary to the spiritual nature, and the extent of the moral law, which was written on Adam's heart; contrary to the repetitions of the covenant of works in other parts of the scripture. Hence, our divines have justly considered the positive precept about abstaining from the

tree of knowledge of good and evil, as not excluding, but including all the commands of the moral law. So that the condition of the covenant of works, though couched under the positive precept, is not rightly understood; if it is not considered as including perfect obedience to both the first and second tables of the moral law. The matters about which men's obedience is exercised, are varied according to the various situations, circumstances and relations of men; and yet the proper form of the covenant of works, which consists, as has been just now observed, in the federal connexion between perfect obedience and eternal life; and between disobedience and eternal death, continue the same in the case of all that are in their natural state. In short, it seems plain, from many places of scripture, particularly from the texts already referred to in the 6th and 7th chapters of the epistle to the Romans, that it is the privilege of believers only, to be not under the law as a covenant; and consequently, that all the rest of mankind are under it in that form.

Alex. How can sinners be said to be under it, when it makes no promise to any sinner?

Ruf. So far as this affects the matter in question, it proceeds upon the erroneous supposition, which has been considered already; viz. that men's being under the law as a covenant is one and the same thing with their being under an obligation to seek justification and life by their own obedience. It may only be added, that it is contrary to the common sense of mankind to suppose that a person is free from the obligation of the law, because he is a malefactor to whom the law promises nothing. The truth is, men are under the law as a covenant of works, while they are under *that law* which promises life to the perfect or personal obedience, and threatens death on account of the disobedience of all that are under it; or, in other words, which establishes a federal connexion between their perfect obedience and eternal life; and between every instance of their disobedience and eternal death.

Alex. Is not the moral law distinguishable from the covenant of works, as well as from the covenant of grace? If so, it does not follow from men's being said to be under the law, that they are under the covenant of works.

Ruf. In answer to this objection, I observe, that it may indeed be inferred from the law's being distinguishable from the covenant of works, that men might possibly have been under the law, without being under the covenant of works. But we cannot reason from the possibility of a thing depending on the will of God, to the actual existence of it. In the next place, it is absurd to insinuate, that men's being under the law may be understood as well of their being under the covenant of grace, as of their being under the covenant of works. For the scripture, in speaking of the relation of men in their natural state to the covenant of works, never opposes that covenant to the law, as it does the covenant of grace. It is never said to men in their natural state, Ye are not under the covenant of works, but under the law; as it is said to believers, Ye are not under the law, but under grace; that is, under the covenant of grace. Our larger catechism, as I observed before, calls a definition of the covenant of works, the moral law: but would any be so absurd as to call a definition of the covenant of grace,

the moral law? The Westminster divines had good reason to call the covenant of works the moral *law;* because the scripture does so. The scripture, in speaking of justification, continually uses the word *law* for the moral law; *The righteousness of God without the law is manifested; Ye are not under the law; What the law could not do, because it was weak through the flesh.** At the same time, it is evident, that in such places, the word *law* is to be understood of *the law as a covenant;* that being the way of justification before God, that stands opposed to the gospel-way of it. In this sense, being under the law is represented as the natural state of fallen Adam, and of all his descendants by ordinary generation; as in Rom. iii. 19. God never having, since the creation of men, proposed the moral law to them, (out of Christ and out of the covenant of grace,) otherwise than as a covenant.

Alex. The assembly in their act in 1722, own, that it is a precious gospel truth, that believers are free from the law as it is a covenant of works. Hence, some may allege, that it is a strained consequence from their making the freedom of the believers from the law consist in their not being obliged to seek justification by their own obedience, to infer, that they meant to deny the privilege of believers, and to make them no happier than unbelievers.

Ruf. The assembly have shewn the justice of this inference very plainly, by their condemning, in the same act, this position, *that the law, as to believers, is divested of its promise of life and threatening of death.* For hence, it is evident, that they keep the believer, equally with the unbeliever, under the commanding and condemning power of the law. For if the law, as to the believer, be not really divested of its promise of life; then, he is under the commanding power thereof: so that his obedience, being such perfect obedience as the law requires, has the promise of life; and thus he must have another law-title to life and eternal salvation, than Christ's obedience. And if the law, as to the believer, be not really divested of its threatening of death; then, he is under the condemning power thereof. So that, according to the assembly, his sins render him actually obnoxious to condemnation and eternal death, though he be in Christ Jesus, contrary to the express declaration of the apostle.†

Alex. It is supposed, that the assembly understood the author's position, which you have mentioned, of the law considered as a rule of life.

Ruf. This seems unintelligible; since that position expressly respects the law as a covenant, or as the rule of justification. But if it have any meaning at all, it must import their making the moral law, as it is a rule of life to the believer, a law having a promise of life, and a threatening of death; or a law giving life to them upon their obedience, and denouncing death and damnation to them upon their disobedience. This turns the law as a rule of life in the hand of Christ, into a law or covenant of works, speaking life to the doer and death to the transgressor. I may add, that the associate presbytery's judgement, that the assembly in this part of their act represented believers as still under a covenant of works, is much supported by what was formerly shewn to be taught by that assembly; namely,

* Rom. iii. 21—vi. 14—viii. 3. † Ibid. viii. 1.

That holy obedience is properly a federal or conditional mean, and has some kind of causality, in order to the obtaining of eternal glory.

On this head, then, the associate presbytery asserted, 1st, That whatever the law as a covenant of works promises or threatens, in itself, and as to them who are under it; yet, as to the believer, it is really divested of the promise of life and threatening of death; and that the believer holds his legal right and claim to eternal life, only by the perfect obedience of Christ to the law in his room; and holds his legal security against eternal death, only by the complete satisfaction of Christ to the justice of God in the threatening of his law; and not by any law having a promise of life to his own obedience, or a threatening of death to his disobedience. They condemned this tenet, that the law as to believers, is vested with a promise of life and a threatening of death; or that their obedience is properly a federal and conditional mean in order to their obtaining eternal glory. They also condemned this opinion, that the believer's not being under the law, is the same thing with his not being obliged to seek justification by his own obedience; as if unbelievers, under the gospel dispensation, were equally free from the commanding power of the law as a covenant of works, with believers.

2ndly, They asserted, that the doctrine of the believer's freedom from the law as a covenant of works, whether in its commanding or condemning power, has no tendency to licentiousness, or to loose the believer from the obligation of the law, as it is a rule of life: and they condemned the opinion of those, who hold that this scriptural doctrine has any such tendency.

3dly, They also asserted, that though all unbelievers do remain under the law as a covenant, both in its commanding and condemning power, yet none of them are obliged to seek justification by their own obedience:—But, on the contrary, it is the great duty of all the hearers of the gospel, and also their inestimable privilege to seek justification only through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ: and they condemned the opinion, that unbelievers, through their being under the law as a covenant of works, are obliged to seek justification by their own obedience.

§ 38. *Alex.* Another charge which the assembly brings against the Marrow is, that the fear of punishment and hope of reward ought not to be motives of a believer's obedience. In support of this charge, they quote these words of the Marrow: "Would you not have be-"lievers eschew evil and do good, for fear of hell, or for hope of hea-"ven? Ans. No, indeed; I would not have any believer do either "the one or the other: for so far forth as they do so, their obedience "is but slavish."*

Ruf. The true sense of these and other words of the Marrow, quoted by the assembly, is clearly determined by passages connected with them: as when the author says, "Though before a man do truly "believe in Christ, he may so reform his life and amend his ways, "that, as touching the righteousness which is of the law, he may be, "with the apostle, blameless: yet, being under the covenant of works, "all the obedience that he yields to the law, all his avoiding what "the law forbids, and doing what the law commands, is begotten by

* Chap. iii. § 7.

"the law of works of Hagar the bond woman, by the force of self-
"love: and so indeed they are the fruit and works of a bond servant,
"who is moved and constrained to all he doth for fear of punishment
"and hope of reward. And so all that such a man doth is but hypoc-
"risy; for he pretends the serving of God, whereas, indeed, he in-
"tends the serving of himself. And how can he do otherwise? For
"whilst he wants faith, he wants all things: he is an empty vine, and
"therefore must needs bring forth fruit to himself. But when a man,
"through the hearing of faith, receives the Spirit of Christ, Gal. iii. 2,
"the Spirit, according to the measure of faith, writes the lively law
"of love in his heart; whereby he is enabled to work freely, and of
"his own accord, without the coaction or compulsion of the law. For
"the love wherewith Christ, or God in Christ, hath loved him, and
"which by faith is apprehended of him, will constrain him to do so,
"according to that of the apostle, *The love of Christ constraineth us.*
"This is the true child-like obedience, being begotten by faith, of
"Sarah the free woman, by force of God's love. And so it is the
"only true and sincere obedience; for, as Dr. Preston says, to do a
"thing in love is to do it in sincerity."*

These and the like passages of the Marrow shew, that the author's scope is to put us on our guard against a mercenary servile spirit in our obedience, acting or bringing forth fruit to ourselves. And to extend the meaning of such passages farther, as if they imported a direction or exhortation to disregard the awfulness of the Divine threatenings and judgements against sin, exciting to stand in awe of committing it; and to forget the excellency of the recompence of reward, so as not to be animated thereby to the obedience of love, is contrary to the tenor and design of the author's meaning. Thus the believer's reward, which is the enjoyment of God himself, is not the reward of service done by the believer, and so not the reward of a servant; but the inheritance of sons, secured to the believer previous to his obedience. In like manner, the believer ought to have in his eye the depth of that misery from which he has by grace escaped, and to regard the threatenings of that eternal wrath and misery, which his sins in themselves deserve; that he may be thereby excited to adore the love of his Redeemer in delivering him from so great a death, and to the obedience of gratitude, according to 2 Corinthians v. 14, 15. The believer is also bound to lay to heart the threatenings of fatherly chastisements, as evidences of his Heavenly Father's detestation of sin, exciting him to abhor it the more, and as evidences of his Father's love in correcting him for his profit, that he may be a partaker of his holiness. Such views the believer ought to have of what is promised and of what is threatened. But it is quite another matter, and contrary to the genuine exercise of the christian, as such, to be influenced by the promise or the threatening, as if his obedience were the procuring cause, or a proper federal ground or condition of his freedom from punishment, or of his enjoyment of the blessing; since all boasting is excluded by the gospel, the believer's only plea being the sovereign mercy of God in Christ. That such is the true sense of the passages of the Marrow, referred to by the assembly in their acts, will not be denied by any attentive and candid reader.

* Chap. iii. § 6.

On the other hand, the assembly appears to have condemned these passages in the sense now stated; and to have taught, that a believer ought to be swayed in his obedience by motives of legal servile fears and hopes. For their act in 1722 allows no other legal servile hope of heaven, than the hope of obtaining a right and title to it by our own works; insinuating, that no other regard to the reward in our obedience, can be reckoned mercenary: and they assert, that the hope of obtaining the possession and enjoyment of heaven by our own obedience, is not mercenary; though our obedience be, at the same time, considered as properly a federal and conditional mean and cause of their enjoying eternal life. Thus, they divide the glory of our enjoying salvation between Christ and the creature, as to the ground of our hope of it.

True spiritual obedience flows from love to Christ, casting out fear of wrath and punishment, which necessarily hath torment in it. Nor is it influenced by any servile legal hope of reward; or any view of a legal or federal connexion between the obedience, and the enjoyment of the inheritance, which is by promise alone.

Alex. Some of the texts quoted by the assembly represent fear as a motive to obedience, 2 Corint. v. 11, *Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*: Heb. xii. 28, 29, *Let us serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a continuing fire.* And some of these texts represent the prospect of the great reward as the motive to it; Collos. iii. 24, *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance:* Heb. xi. 26, *He had respect unto the recompence of the reward.*

Ruf. With regard to these texts that speak of the fear with which believers should be moved in serving the Lord, though the majesty of God and the awfulness of his threatenings and judgements should fill the believer with reverential fear, and lead him to a humbling consideration of what his sins deserve; yet he is not called to be moved or excited to obedience by the fear of his falling into hell for omitting duty or committing sin; but is ever called to believe his infallible security against going down into that pit, through the ransom, which God has found. A filial fear of God and of his fatherly displeasure is worthy of the believer, being a fruit of faith and of the spirit of adoption; but a slavish fear of hell and wrath, from which he is delivered by Christ, is not a fruit of faith, but of unbelief. The fear which Christ commands, of him who can cast both soul and body into hell, is not a slavish fear of the wrath to come; but such as is consistent with the faith of deliverance from it. With regard to those scriptures which set forth the everlasting inheritance under the notion of a reward, since this reward, being infinite, could only be purchased by an infinite price, even the price given by Immanuel. This reward is declared to be given to us, not of debt, but of grace, to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly: it is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus the believer, in his respect to this recompence of reward, is called to act, not for life, as the reward of his service; but from the faith of his certain enjoyment of that life, as the reward of the service of the new Covenant Head. And the more he views it, the more he should and will be animated to cheerful obedience.

The associate Presbytery, therefore, condemned the two following propositions: 1. That there is a legal connexion instituted, between the obedience of believers, and their enjoying rewards or escaping punishments, temporal or eternal; that the Lord deals with them in this matter upon law-terms; and that the hopes of enjoying the one and of escaping the other, are to rise and fall according to the measure of their obedience.

2. That a person's being moved to obedience by the hope of heaven, cannot be said to be mercenary, in any other sense than that of obtaining a right and title to it by his own works; and that a believer ought to be moved to obedience, or to eschew evil and do good, by the hopes of his enjoying heaven, or any good, temporal or eternal, by his own obedience, as the federal, conditional mean and cause thereof.

§ 39. *Alex.* Another charge against the Marrow is, the defending of six Antinomian paradoxes, by applying to them the distinction between the law of works and the law of Christ. The paradoxes are these: 1. *That a believer is not under the law, but is altogether delivered from it.* 2. *That a believer doth not commit sin.* 3. *That the Lord can see no sin in a believer.* 4. *That the Lord is not angry with a believer for his sins.* 5. *That the Lord does not chastise a believer for his sins.* 6. *That a believer has no cause either to confess his sins, or to crave pardon at the hands of God for them; or yet to fast or mourn, or humble himself before the Lord for them.* Are not these expressions most unjustifiable?

Ruf. The author of the Marrow says, concerning these propositions, "That in one sense, they may all of them be truly affirmed; and "in another sense, they may all of them be truly denied:" and for shewing in what sense he admits, and in what sense he rejects these propositions, he distinguishes between the law, as it is the law of works, which he explains to be the law considered as a covenant of works; and the law as it is the law of Christ, by which he understands the law considered as a rule of obedience in the hand of Christ, who hath, as their surety, fulfilled the righteousness of the law-covenant in the stead of his people.

Alex. Is it necessary to maintain this distinction as scriptural?

Ruf. It is carefully to be maintained. If we lose this distinction, we will lose several sweet gospel truths along with it. For example, if we make no difference between the law as a covenant, and the law as a rule of life to believers in the hand of Christ, it will follow, that believers are still under the law as a covenant, contrary to scripture, Rom. vi. 14, and vii. 3. It will also follow, that the sins of believers, being breaches of the covenant of works, not only deserve the everlasting wrath of God, which is a most certain truth; but also make them liable to actual condemnation, contrary to Rom. viii. 1, and Psal. xxxii. 1, 2.

Alex. What the assembly said, concerning this distinction between the law of works and the law of Christ was, That it is groundless, as applied by the author of the Marrow, to defend six Antinomian paradoxes. Now, what were the truths taught by the author's application of the said distinction to these paradoxes?

Ruf. The first of these truths is, That believers are not under the law as a covenant, but are altogether freed from it; though they are still under it as a rule of obedience. The second is, That a believer does not commit sin, as it is a transgression of the law of works; but when he sinneth, he transgresseth the law, considered as a rule of holiness in the hand of a Mediator. The third is, That God sees no sin in a justified believer under the covert of the perfect righteousness of Christ, as a transgression of the law of works; though he still sees it and marks it, as a transgression of the law of Christ. The fourth is, That the Lord is not angry with a believer for his sins with a vindictive wrath, but with a fatherly displeasure. The fifth is, That the Lord doth not chastise a believer for his sins, as an implacable enemy with law-vengeance, but with the rod of a father, not for their destruction, but for their reformation. The sixth is, That though the sins of believers, considered as transgressions of the law or covenant of works, deserve eternal death; and though they are even many ways aggravated above the sins of others; yet, seeing their sins, considered as transgressions of the law or covenant of works, were laid upon Christ; a believer, when he fasts and mourns and confesseth his sins, ought to view them as laid upon Christ; and believing the forgiveness of them and his deliverance from the commanding and condemning power of the law of works through the imputed righteousness of Christ, he is to fast and mourn for and confess his sins, as they affect himself in his justified state, not as violations of the law of works, but only as violations of the law in the hand of a Mediator, and as committed against and tending to dishonour his reconciled God and Father in Christ.

Alex. Was the assembly chargeable with any error in condemning the application of the distinction between the law of works and the law of Christ, to palliate the expressions used in these paradoxes? This was perhaps all that Mr. Willison had in view, when he said, that some assertions, in the associate presbytery's act concerning the doctrine of grace, bordered too near the doctrine called Antinomian.

Ruf. The Antinomian sense of these six propositions, as Mr. Boston in his notes on the Marrow observes, is, no doubt, erroneous and detestable, and is opposed and sufficiently confuted by the Marrow. But this perversion of them could not warrant the assembly to condemn the propositions themselves *simpliciter* or absolutely, as Antinomian errors. One might as well say, That it is a Popish or Lutheran error, to call the bread, in the Lord's supper, Christ's body; or that this proposition, A sinner is justified by faith, is a Socinian, Arminian or Baxterian error, on account of the heterodox construction put upon that expression, by persons of such denominations. Four of these propositions are in the express words of scripture, and therefore must have a sound sense. The first is found in Rom. vii. 6, *Now we are delivered from the law.* The second in 1 John iii. 6, *Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not:* verse 9th, *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin;*—and, *He cannot sin.* The third in Numb. xxiii. 21, *He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel:* Song iv. 7, *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.* The fifth and sixth of these propositions are also to be accounted scriptural, as necessarily following from the

former. The expressions are not to be rejected, but to be interpreted and defended according to the analogy of faith. But there are six erroneous and dangerous positions, which the associate presbytery consider as taught by the assembly in their condemnation of these paradoxes: viz. 1st, That believers are not altogether freed from the law as a covenant of works, but are still under it. 2ndly, That when a believer sins, he sins against the law of works; and therefore must be liable to the penalty of it. 3dly, That God seeth iniquity in believers, as it is a violation of the old covenant, and consequently, that he seeth it with an eye of vindictive justice; notwithstanding the satisfaction of Christ, and their being under the covert of his law-magnifying righteousness. 4thly, That when God is angry with believers for their sins, he pursues them upon the footing of the law of works; that is, with the same vindictive wrath with which he pursued the Surety, when he was made a curse for them. 5thly, That when God corrects his children, he does it in his vindictive and revenging wrath, and not in a way of fatherly chastisement. 6thly, That when a believer fasts, mourns and confesseth sin, and seeks the pardon of it; he is to view himself as still under the guilt of the violation of the law of works; notwithstanding his being dead to that law, through faith in Jesus Christ.

§ 40. *Alex.* I see, that the associate presbytery have levelled their act against legalism: but were they as zealous to warn people of the strong propensity of corrupt nature to turn the grace of God into licentiousness? Were they as careful to maintain the authority of his holy law, as a rule of duty under the gospel?

Ruf. While it is often peculiarly necessary to explain and vindicate some article of religion which is chiefly attacked, it is a common artifice of Satan, and of the opposers of such an article, to represent it as of little importance; and to insinuate, that the maintenance of it is inconsistent with the attention which ought to be bestowed on matters of more importance; and particularly that, when ministers dwell much on the doctrine of grace, they neglect to inculcate the duties of an holy practice. The associate presbytery, aware of this, and sensible that the propensity of man's depraved nature to establish his own righteousness as the ground of hope, and his aversion to the holiness of the Divine law, are equally strong, have all along explained the doctrine of grace, as affording the most powerful incitements to the study of holiness in heart and life. Besides, they have added two distinct articles on obedience to the law.

The first article proposes several considerations showing, that the law is obligatory as a rule of duty under the gospel. The *first* of these considerations is, That the law of the Creator is now issued forth to us in the hand of the Mediator; and that we are to eye the authority of God in him, hearing him as the King whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion. Hence, the law is called the law of Christ.* The *second* consideration they propose, is this; That the Lord enforces obedience to the law upon evangelical, and so upon everlasting grounds. Thus, in the preface to the ten commandments, obedience is enjoined, first, on the ground of the infinite sovereignty of God as Jehovah; and then, on the ground of his gracious relation

* Gal. vi. 2. John xiv. 15. 1 Cor. ix. 21.

to us in Christ as our God; and, lastly, on the ground of the glorious work of man's redemption by Jesus Christ. The *third* consideration is, That the end of Christ's coming was not to destroy the law, but to fulfil and establish it. The *fourth* is, That obedience or conformity to the law, is one of the great ends of our redemption by Jesus Christ. He died not to procure a liberty to sin, but a liberty from sin.* The *fifth* is, That all the followers of Christ are expressly required to remember the law of Moses.† Such a regard had Christ to this law, that he went through a course of perfect obedience to it, not only that he might fulfil it in our stead, but that he might set us an example of perfect holiness. He requires all who are called by his name, to depart from all iniquity, and to be holy as he is holy. He declares, that except their faith in him bring forth the fruits of obedience to his law, their faith is dead; and that at the last day, their faith in him will be evidenced by the fruits of it.

The second article shews the nature of evangelical obedience to the law. Here it is observed, 1. That the leading principle of this obedience is faith in Jesus Christ. By faith the soul is united in Christ as a Head of influence, as well as of government. Hence, all acts of obedience in believers, are acts of Christ living in them.‡ 2. That the motives exciting to evangelical obedience are taken from the gospel: such as the consideration of grace, love and mercy of God, manifested in Christ. 3. That gospel obedience is influenced by evangelical affections. The love of self influences the obedience of the legalist, but the love of Christ constrains the believer; and this love begets delight, a ready mind, zeal, filial fear. 4. That gospel obedience is to be performed for gospel ends.—Christ must be the beginning and the ending of all we do. Legal ends are to be avoided, such as, that by our acts of obedience we may make atonement, either in whole or in part, for our sins; that we may be justified or accepted before God; that God may be moved by our duties to bestow his mercies upon us; that we may give to God a requital or recompence for his mercies; that our obedience to the law may be any federal or conditional mean in order to our possession of eternal glory.

§ 41. Before we put an end to this conversation, I would take notice of an act of the associate synod in the year 1754, which must be considered as belonging to the doctrine of grace. It is entitled, an Act of the Associate Synod, containing an assertion of some gospel truths, in opposition to Arminian errors, on the head of universal redemption. It consists of seven articles.

The first article asserts, that, in the covenant of grace, our Lord Jesus became the federal head and representative of those only among mankind-sinners, whom God hath, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity elected to everlasting life: and he was made an undertaking surety for them only.

It is a very important truth, that Christ was constituted in the covenant of grace from eternity the federal head and representative of his people; as Adam, after his creation, was constituted the federal head and representative of his natural posterity, in the covenant of works. In this respect, Christ is called the second man, in contradistinction to the first man.‖ As Adam was made the representative

* Dan. ix. 24. 1 John iii. 1, 6. † Mal. iv. 4. ‡ Gal. ii. 2. ‖ 1 Cor. xv. 45, 47.

of his natural seed in the covenant of works, so Christ was made the representative of his spiritual seed in the covenant of grace. Hence, Christ bears the name of his people in these words of the Father to him, *Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.** When the scripture says, that *grace was given his people in Christ Jesus before the world began;* and that *God chose them in Christ before the foundation of the World;* it must mean,† that they were stated *in him*, as their federal representative, from eternity; in order to their future being in him in their mystical union with him, in time.

Alex. Some deny, that we may consider his people in him as their federal representative, before or in order to his satisfaction for sin.

Ruf. Why then does he bear the character of an undertaking surety? In every case of suretyship, the law first considers some person as bearing that character, and therefore as one with the party for whom he has become a surety, before it deal with him as such, in exacting from him the payment of any debt, due from that party. So the law of God could not be considered as requiring of the Lord Jesus any doing or suffering in answer to the demands which it had on his people, before it considered him as having become their surety.

§ 42. The second article asserts, that our Lord Jesus Christ redeemed none others by his death but the elect only. According to Isai. liii. 4, 5, 6, 8, the persons whose iniquities he bore, as having been laid on him, for whose transgression he was stricken, were persons whom the Lord distinguishes from others as his people; who, in the event, are healed by his stripes; characters, which belong to the elect only.

When our Lord says, in John x. 15, *I lay down my life for the sheep;* and in chap. xvii. 19, *For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth;* if it might be supposed, that he died for others besides those who are called his sheep, or whom he sanctified; then, it would follow, that in these texts he gives but a partial and defective account of those for whom he died, without signifying that he does so:—Nay, on this supposition, it would be a vain and delusive account; because it represents that as the great and distinguishing pledge of his love to his sheep, which likewise belonged to such as were not his sheep.

Alex. The apostle says, in 1 Tim. ii. 5, *He gave himself a ransom for all.*

Ruf. That the general term *all*, here refers to men of all sorts, is evident, from the use of it in the context; in which christians are exhorted to pray and give thanks for all men; for men of all outward sorts or denominations, or any of such indefinitely. Hence, the *all*, in this text, are called many, in the parallel place, Math. xx. 28. Our confession says well, They who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ: nor are any other redeemed by Christ, but the elect only.

§ 43. In the third article, it is asserted, that Christ died out of the greatest special love, for all in whose room he laid down his life, with an intention of having them all effectually redeemed and saved to the glory of his grace: Ephes. v. 23, *Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it:* 1 John iv. 10,

* Isaiah xlix. 3. † 2 Tim. i. 9. Ephes. i. 4.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins: John xv. 13, *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends:* Rom. v. 8, *But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*—verse 9, *Much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.* According to these texts, God's sending his Son to die for any, is the greatest effect of his special love to them; and that by which all other effects of his love are fully secured unto their eternal salvation.

§ 44. The fourth article asserts, that the intercession of Christ is infallibly of the same extent in respect of its objects, with the atonement and satisfaction made in his death. So that he actually and effectually makes intercession for all those for whom he laid down his life, or for whom he hath purchased redemption, that it may be fully applied to them all in due season. Rom. viii. 34, *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* The nature of Christ's priesthood requires, that his atonement and intercession be of the same extent, as to the objects of them; while his intercession is just the appearance that he makes in heaven as their Mediator, Heb. ix. 24. The high priest under the law made a typical appearance within the vail, for all those for whom he made a typical atonement without the vail. But if Christ has made an atonement for many, for whom he does not now appear in the presence of God, then his priesthood, instead of excelling, falls greatly short of the type. Besides, this supposition represents him as declining from the love, out of which he laid down his life, in neglecting the most part of those for whom he did so: nay, as becoming negligent and unfaithful about what he has merited by his death for many. But it is evident, that they for whom Christ makes intercession are not all men, but those whom the Father gave to Christ Jesus, John xvii. 9, 23; those whom he saves to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25; that is, they are the elect only.

§ 45. The fifth article declares that the death of Christ, as it is stated in the covenant of grace, hath a necessary, inseparable, certain, and infallible connexion with, and efficacy for, the actual and complete salvation of all those for whom he died. So that redemption is certainly applied and effectually communicated to all those for whom Christ purchased it; to all in whose stead he died, being in due time, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and glorified.

1. The infallible connexion between the death of Christ and the actual and complete salvation of those for whom he died, is the necessary consequence of the promise made to Christ of his seeing his seed, of his seeing the travail of his soul, of their justification as the sure effect of his bearing their iniquities, Isai. liii. 10, 11.

2. This connexion appears from those texts which represent the death of Christ as a redemption. For the immediate effect of redemption, or of the payment of a ransom, is the certain deliverance of the captive, and not a mere possibility of deliverance: Ephes. i. 7, *In whom we have redemption through his blood:* Heb. ix. 12, *He*

entered in once into the holy place, having ... for us.

3. This connexion appears from those texts which represent the promised blessings of the covenant of grace as the certain fruit of the death of Christ; such as reconciliation to God and justification: Rom. v. 8, 9, 10, *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* Adoption, Gal. iv. 4, 5, *God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we may receive the adoption of sons.* Faith, Philip. i. 29, *Unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ to believe on him.* Sanctification, John xvii. 19, *For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth.* The privilege of being made kings and priests unto God, Rev. v. 9, 10.

Hence appears the pernicious tendency of the scheme of universal redemption; as thereby the death of Christ is set forth as having no certain connexion with the salvation of any. Thus persons are induced to attempt to get some intervening exercises or endeavours, such as earnest concern about sin and salvation, pleadings, desire and delight, that may serve to establish a connexion between the blood of Christ and salvation; in order that they may reasonably infer the latter from the former. When persons take this method, it is evident, that the immediate ground of their faith and hope of salvation, is not the blood of Christ, but their own intervening exercises and endeavours. Their hope of salvation, in this case, has its immediate dependence on themselves, on some works of righteousness which they have done. This is a scheme for turning away sinners from the covenant of grace to seek justification and salvation in the way of the covenant of works. For *if it be of works, then it is no more of grace,* Rom. xi. 6. Many in our day hold universal redemption, who profess to reject the other Arminian articles. But they neither consider how contrary the scheme of universal redemption, or, as they now term it, a universal ransom, is in itself to the scripture account of the vicarious nature and proper ends of Christ's death; nor how closely it is connected with the other Arminian tenets.

The truth on this head is expressed in these words of the Larger Catechism: "Christ, by his mediation, hath procured redemption with all other benefits of the covenant of grace.*

§ 46. In the sixth article, there are several positions necessary to be attended to on this subject; such as, 1. That Christ and his benefits cannot be divided. These benefits are given along with him, Rom. viii. 32. Persons come to the enjoyment of them, when they are called effectually to the fellowship of Christ, and not otherwise, 1 Corinth. i. 9. When Christ is ours, then all his benefits are ours, Song ii. 16—1 Corinth. i. 30: and whoever actively receives or enjoys his benefits, does so in the way of enjoying himself.

2. That the benefits of Christ's purchase cannot be divided one from another. Those who come to partake of any of these benefits by faith, are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; a sealing which

* Larg. Cat. quest. 57.

Eph. i. 13. They are regenerated, is the earnest of their, according to the hope of eternal life, Tit. iii. 7.

3. Whatever things are actively received, or used, otherwise than by faith in a state of union with Christ, are not to be reckoned among the benefits purchased by his death. Hence, it is contrary to the scriptures to represent the common benefits of life as purchased for all men by the death of Christ, and enjoyed by them as such. No other things can be properly reckoned among the benefits of Christ's purchase, than such things as could not be bestowed upon men, consistently with the claims of God's vindictive justice, without a satisfaction. Believers, indeed, have all the common benefits of the present life, and likewise all the crosses and trials of it through Christ as Mediator, in the channel of new covenant promises, with a new covenant blessing upon them. But the common benefits of life, considered in respect of the peculiar conveyance of them to believers, are not things of this world, but of a supernatural, spiritual and gracious character; and, in this respect, are things that are received by faith. Some have supposed that the outward privileges of the church are benefits of Christ's purchase; and yet are common to all within the visible church, unbelievers as well as believers. But though all within the visible church have access to her privileges; yet they are truly, and in effect, benefits to none but real and sincere church members, or true believers. The inward saving effects, indeed, of these outward privileges upon the Lord's people, with the special blessing thereby communicated to them, are benefits purchased by the death of Christ. But, with regard to the outward privileges themselves, it may be observed, that as the purport of them is only God's prescribing duty in the gospel call, and his declaring our obligation to comply with it, they cannot be considered as the purchase of Christ. We may not conclude, that every thing which is a mean of salvation is purchased by the death of Christ. The doctrines and promises, the precepts of the Bible are means of salvation; but it would be absurd to say, that they were all purchased by the death of Christ. Though all promised blessings were purchased, yet the promises themselves were not purchased. All the outward means of grace and salvation, in the dispensation of gospel ordinances, belong to the exercise of Christ's prophetical and kingly offices. But neither were the mediatory offices of Christ, nor, strictly speaking, the exercise of them, any more than his incarnation, purchased by his death. Nor are any spiritual influences or gifts to be reckoned among the benefits of his purchase, but such as are saving, or so far as they are of a saving nature or effect. The common influences and gifts of the Spirit in unbelievers, are things which do not imply any special favour or acceptance with God; they are things which could be granted to sinners consistently with the claims of law and justice, without a satisfaction; and therefore, even to such sinners as remain forever under the curse. Many influences of the Spirit upon unbelievers are instances of God's contending with them in the way of rebuking, checking and restraining them. But surely God did not need the purchase of Christ, in order that he might have right or access to contend with, or controul his adversaries. Many influences and gifts of the Spirit in unbelievers are

so ordered as to be, in respect of their tendency and issue, of saving benefit to others. Such benefit is, no doubt, the fruit of Christ's purchase to those who obtain it: but it does not follow, that these gifts and influences, in themselves or as they are in unbelievers, who have no saving benefit by them, are to be considered as the fruit of Christ's purchase.

The elect of God, before conversion, are under the curse—children of wrath, even as others: so that the common influences and gifts of the Spirit in them before conversion, absolutely considered, cannot be reckoned benefits of Christ's purchase. For how can they be enjoying the benefits of his purchase, while they enjoy no fellowship with him in God's favour and acceptance? But then all the common influences and gifts of the Spirit in them, with all the conduct of Providence towards them, are so ordered as to have a tendency and subservience to their conversion; in which they issue at the set time. All this subservience is indeed the purchase of Christ. But the elect do not come to the active receiving, using and enjoying of this benefit, till their conversion, or actual believing in Christ.

§ 47. The seventh article asserts the general, free and unlimited offer of Christ and salvation through him by the gospel unto sinners of mankind as such; and also, the consistency of that offer with the scriptural doctrine of particular redemption, which is expressed in the preceding articles.

In the first place, this article represents the ground of the offer and call of the gospel, as lying in three things: 1. In the intrinsic sufficiency of the death of Christ; his death being considered as including his whole surety-righteousness, the holiness of his nature, the obedience of his life, and his suffering unto death. Thus, *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;* the law having its end in Christ, as it has in him a full answer to all its demands. His blood is precious blood: his righteousness is the righteousness of God.* 2. In the common relation which he bears to mankind-sinners as such, in the constitution of his person as their Kinsman-Redeemer, being thus a fit *Mediator between God and man,* one that is *mighty to save,* one *chosen out of the people;*† and also in the nature of his offices as equally suitable to the need of mankind-sinners as such; like the office of a physician, which bears the same relation to all diseased persons, especially to all that labour under the same disease. 3. In the absolute promises and free grant of justification and eternal life to mankind-sinners as such, in the gospel; declaring, that the possession of these blessings is to be certainly obtained in the way of believing. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish, but have everlasting life.*‡ *My Father,* says Christ, speaking to unbelievers as well as believers, *giveth you the true bread from heaven.*‖

* Rom. x. 4—iii. 21, 22, 25, 26. 1 Peter i. 19.

† 1 Tim. ii. 5. Psalms lxxxix. 19.

‡ John iii. 16.

‖ John vi. 32. Non dicit Christus, Pater meus hunc vobis panem dare potest, vel daturus olim est, sed dat vobis, id est, exhibet et offert jam præsentem verum de cœlo panem, modo hunc non contemnatis. Musculus in locum.

And this is the record, which all the hearers of the gospel are bound by God's authority to believe, if they would not make him a liar; *That God hath given to us eternal life; and that this life is in his Son.** *This is the covenant, which I will make with the house of Israel, saith the Lord;* and which God now makes with the visible church, warranting each member of it to take hold of it by faith for his own salvation: *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. A new heart will I give you. And I will put my Spirit within you.*† God's free grant of Christ's righteousness and salvation, or his absolute promises, as they are directed to sinners of mankind indefinitely, are to be immediately considered, not as an expression of God's purpose, or of what he will do in the event, but as an expression of his free offer so to do or perform: a free grant made to the hearers of the gospel, warranting any one of them all, or whosoever will, to apply to themselves by faith Jesus Christ and the blessings promised in him. The gospel is *an extract* from the glorious original of the new covenant. In this extract, the promises bear a direction to sinners of mankind indefinitely; a blank being left, where the names of the elect are recorded in the original. So that in this extract, these promises are not to be considered as an expression or declaration of God's purpose of saving any person in particular; but only as that person is determined to fill up the blank with his name, by the hand of an applying faith. At the same time, God's authority is interposed in this matter, requiring all the hearers of the gospel to fill up the blank with their names, by making an application of Christ, with all his redemption and salvation, to themselves in particular. *This is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*‡

In the second place, this article asserts the consistency of the gospel offer and call with the scriptural doctrine of particular redemption. Who the particular persons were, whom the Father gave to Christ, stating them in him as their Covenant-Head; or for whom Christ undertook to die as their Surety, is among the secret things which belong to the Lord our God.‖ And as persons are not to inquire whether they be among the elect, neither are they to inquire whether they be among them for whom, or in whose place Christ laid down his life, before they venture to receive him, and rest upon him, as he is offered to them in the gospel. The declarations of grace, about the general claim or right of access, such as, *To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and sent to bless us,* belong to all the hearers of the gospel, and are applicable to each of them before they believe, or though they should never believe. But with regard to the declarations of grace about an interest in Christ, and in his blood, as when it is said, *He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;*

* 1 John v. 10, 11. † Jerem. xxxi. 33. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27.

‡ 1 John iii. 23. ‖ Deut. xxix. 29.

the chastisement of our peace was upon him, with his stripes we are healed; the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all; he is the Lord our righteousness; the propitiation for our sins, our peace: though these and the like declarations are to be set forth in the dispensation of the gospel, that they may be applied by faith, upon the ground of the general right of access; yet they never can be applied to any person in a state of unbelief. These declarations are always true in the mouth of faith; but never in the mouth of unbelief; which indeed cannot speak any truth concerning Christ. The truth about Christ and his blood, which justifying faith immediately terminates on, is a matter of present truth. In the case of justification, faith does not look back to Divine purposes: it has no consideration of what may have formerly been true about the person believing, in any counsels of the Father and the Son concerning him. But it looks straight out to Christ as revealed in the word, to his blood and righteousness as there set forth; and, on the ground of that exhibition, makes the person apply all to himself. But for whom it was particularly that Christ offered up the atonement, and for whom the Lord received it at his hand, is a matter no way considered in this case: God and Christ are considered as presently offering this atonement in the word of grace, to be received by faith. Upon this ground, faith receives it, appropriates it, and rests upon it, as an atonement for all the guilt of the person unto his eternal salvation. As faith could have no footing in the scheme of universal redemption, which admits of no certain connexion between the death of Christ and salvation; so it has no immediate regard to the particularity of redemption, as belonging at all to its ground and warrant; or yet as any bar in its way. But, according to the doctrine of particular redemption, faith finds an inseparable connexion between the death of Christ and salvation: and as faith has an immediate access to his death, that is, to his whole surety-righteousness in the word of grace; so it takes hold of his righteousness, which brings along with it the whole chain of saving blessings promised in the new covenant.

DIALOGUE IV.

Public covenanting, a duty of the church under the New Testament dispensation.....Religious covenants which have been entered into by the church, binding on posterity.....Objections against the Solemn League and Covenant, answered.....The renovation of that Covenant by a bond, adapted to the present circumstances of the church, vindicated..... The various uses of public covenanting.....The reference in the bond of the associate presbytery to the confession of sins prefixed to it, vindicated.....An objection, on account of things deemed obscure and doubtful in the bond of the associate presbytery, answered.....Of their act about public covenanting, considered as a term of communion.....Of the season of public covenanting.....Of the recognising of our former covenant engagements in our public covenanting.....Of the evangelical manner of covenanting.

As in the course of the former conversations between Alexander and Rufus the national covenant of Scotland and the solemn league of the three kingdoms had been frequently mentioned, Alexander was led to think, that the consequences of what our ancestors did in entering into these covenants, (if their doing so was agreeable to the word and appointment of the Lord Christ,) must be unspeakably more important than they are believed to be by the generality of the present age. In that case, the people of these nations, must be perpetually bound to be faithful members of the church of Christ, and to hold the true religion, not only from the authority of the scriptures, but also in regard of the oath of God. The sin of these nations, in their public apostacy from the reformation which they had sworn to maintain, and in denying the obligation of these covenants, is hardly paralleled by the national sin of any other people under heaven, excepting that of the Jews, in crucifying the Lord of glory. Even the Presbyterian churches in America, so far as they are peculiarly connected with the reformed church of Scotland, and so far as they have publicly declined, and obstinately continue their departure from the reformation engaged to in these covenants, cannot be free from a participation in that public guilt. Nay, the prevailing contempt of these covenants, cannot fail to have a baleful influence upon the reformed churches in general; among which the church of Scotland holds a principal rank. Such a view of this matter, is apt to fill a serious mind with alarming apprehensions; God having threatened to send a sword to avenge the quarrel of his covenant. On the other hand, he knew, that many pious and learned men of the present day, consider public covenanting as a peculiarity of the Old Testament dispensation, or merely as a political measure, that may be sometimes expedient. They think, that the forms of religious worship and of church government, for the maintenance of which, our forefathers entered into these covenants, were not of much importance. Many are strongly prejudiced, particularly against the solemn league, because the parliament of England entered into it in the time of a civil war; when, it is supposed, they were chargeable with rebellion against the lawful sovereign; though it is very evident, that the civil war, at that time, between Charles the first and the parliament, was, on his side, for the support of arbitrary government, and for the retaining of superstition—and, on the side of the parliament, for civil liberty,

and for the reformation of religion. Nor could the civil war, on any supposition, justly hinder the people of England and Scotland from entering into a solemn covenant with God, for religion and reformation; or that covenant, when it was entered into by the generality of all ranks, from being the lawful deed of these nations, and consequently, obligatory upon them.

Alexander was considering these things, when Rufus called at his house, and the following conversation took place.

Alex. I have been thinking, Rufus, on public covenanting; a subject much insisted on by the associate presbytery.

Ruf. They indeed endeavoured to revive the practice of public covenanting; and, therefore, along with their act concerning the doctrine of grace, they published an act for renewing the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the three kingdoms, in a manner agreeable to their situation and circumstances.

Alex. It is true, public covenanting was practised under the Old Testament dispensation; but how can it be shewn to be a duty under the New Testament?

§ 48. *Ruf.* If public and social covenanting was the duty of God's church, under the Old Testament dispensation, it must be so still; unless it was among the usages that were laid aside at the introduction of the New Testament dispensation. But we have no good reason to consider it in that light: for it is no other, as to the matter of it, than the duty required in the first commandment, of acknowledging the only true God to be our God, and our obligation to worship and glorify him accordingly. As to the form of an oath, the use of it, (in cases of weight and importance, where it is a proper means of maintaining and promoting truth,) is required in the third commandment. And our larger catechism justly inserts vowing to the Lord, among the ordinances which the second commandment requires us to receive and observe. There are also various prophecies of the Old Testament, which foreshew, that public and social covenanting was to be attended to and practised, as a duty under the new dispensation. It was promised, that *five cities in the land of Egypt*, a remnant not of the ancient Israelites, but of the Egyptians, *shall swear to the Lord of hosts;* shall swear not only by him, but to him; and that they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it.* Again, it is promised, that the time of the more plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit, that is, under the New Testament dispensation, should be a time of public covenanting, as in these words: *I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*† The several clauses of this verse are not to be understood of different professions made by different parties, but as representing the explicit and solemn manner in which the same profession was to be made by the members of the church, severally as individuals, and jointly as one body, one church: for these clauses may be rendered, *One shall say—and he shall call himself—and he shall subscribe.* The Seceders often produce these and other texts

* Isaiah xix. 18, 21. † Ibid. xliv. 3, 4, 5.

out of the prophecies of the Old Testament, respecting New Testament times, as proofs of the duty of public covenanting. And that they do so justly, is very much confirmed by the little success of the attempts which have been made to explain away these texts from having any reference to public covenanting; that is, to explain them away from the native and literal sense of the words; from which we are not to depart without necessity. Nor can the joint, unanimous and formal deed of the churches of Macedonia, in giving their ownselves to the Lord,* be well understood of any thing else, than such covenanting as was practised by the church of God, under the Old Testament. This is indeed a most reasonable service. Jesus Christ is the King whom God hath set on his holy hill of Zion; and his people, the citizens of Zion, are his willing subjects; and ought not such to swear allegiance to their King; and, at a time of great and general defection, to give the most solemn and public assurances of their adherence to all the interests of his kingdom? They are soldiers of Jesus Christ; and should they not swear to be faithful to their Divine Commander? They are witnesses for him; and ought not the testimony they give to his despised truths, to be confirmed by their oath? "As the Lord," says Mr. Willison, in the preface to his Afflicted Man's Companion, "did signally countenance the practice of our "reformers in entering into solemn and national covenants with God, "by the pouring out of his Spirit from on high; so this practice is "sufficiently warranted, both by the light of nature, and by the word "of God in the Old and New Testament."

Alex. Mr. Willison calls the covenanting of the reformers, *national* covenanting, as if it belonged to the civil state. But you represent it as a religious exercise, competent even to a few in their religious capacity only.

Ruf. It is true, that in public covenanting, as much as in partaking of the Lord's supper, persons are considered as church members. Yet they may bear other characters, as men, and as members of civil society; and in their covenanting, may be engaged to the duties belonging to these characters. So the covenanters, in Nehemiah's time, are called princes as well as priests and Levites. So the titles prefixed to the solemn league, noblemen, barons, burgesses, citizens, are no more inconsistent with the religious and spiritual nature of covenanting, than the prefixing of their proper names, John, James, William, and the like, would have been. In public covenanting, persons devoted all they are and have, and, among other things, all their civil relations, to the Lord, and engage to serve him in the discharge of the duties belonging to these relations: and if the Covenanters be sufficient, in respect of number and rank, to represent the whole nation, they, in this transaction, devote the nation to the Lord, declaring, that the people of that nation solemnly consent to be faithful members of his church, and to adhere as long as their nation shall subsist, to all the reformation which they have attained. Every people, to whom the word of God comes, are under a moral obligation to be members of his church; and public covenanting is a solemn acknowledgment of the extent and perpetuity of that obligation. This covenanting, also lays them under a secondary obligation to the same

* 2 Corinth. viii. 5.

duty; the disregard or violation of which, constitutes that perfidy or spiritual adultery, with which the Lord so often charges his people Israel under the Old Testament dispensation. Farther, if there may be a national church, there may be national covenanting, under the New Testament dispensation. But it is evident, that the whole or the generality of the people that compose any nation, may become church members; in which case, there would be a national church. Such an event is meant, when it is said, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;* that is, they now adhered to Christ, as they had done to antichrist, in their collective capacity, as nations. This expression, *The kingdoms are become the Lord's*, is to be understood, not of their becoming his by saving faith; but of their becoming his by a public profession of the faith. As the church under the Old Testament dispensation made this profession in the way of solemn covenanting, we cannot suppose, that under the New Testament, when her relation to the Lord, and the privileges attending that relation, are set in a clearer light, she is less bound to acknowledge it in the same public and solemn manner. In the book of Jeremiah, God, having directed his people to swear, *The Lord liveth in truth, in judgement and in righteousness*, adds a prophecy, that *the nations should bless themselves in him; and that in him they should glory.*† The connexion of these words, leads us to understand them as meaning, that these nations should do so in the way of swearing to the Lord.

Alex. There is no account of a national church of Christ in the time of the apostles.

Ruf. It is no wonder, that we do not find a national church expressly mentioned in the history of the New Testament, while there was not, as yet, any whole nation brought to the profession of the faith. What is equivalent, however, is found in the New Testament. For when we speak of a national church, all that we mean is, that several churches or congregations, of such extent as comprehends the whole or the generality of a nation, are united under one ecclesiastical judicatory, and are properly termed one particular church; the church of that place or nation. So there were several churches in Corinth,‡ which composed one church there.|| The church which Paul persecuted, was one church;§ and yet comprehended many churches in Judea; which had rest immediately upon his conversion.¶ As the whole or the generality of a nation, professing the christian faith, constitute a national church; so the public covenanting of such a church may be called *national covenanting*. Among a people who have come under such solemn covenant engagements, though the generality fall away from their adherence to them; there may be a warrantable renewing of them by a small part of the nation; which is a real, though not a national, renewing of them. Thus, the national covenant of Israel was renewed by Judah, a part of that nation. A few may warrantably essay this duty: it was foretold, that five cities, that is, a few of the many cities of Egypt, should swear to the Lord of hosts.

* Revel. xi. 15. † Jerem. iv. 2. ‡ 1 Corinth. xiv. 34. || Ibid. i. 2.
§ Acts viii. 3. ¶ Ibid. ix. 31.

§ 49. *Alex.* The Seceders hold, that the national covenant of Scotland, which was sworn and subscribed by the people there in the year 1587, and several times afterwards; and the solemn league and covenant of the three kingdoms, taken and subscribed in the year 1643, are binding on posterity.

Ruf. And why should we not allow, that a particular church, having entered into such a covenant of duty, is, ever afterwards, under the obligation of it; since the unchangeable God is the Great Party, to whom the oath is sworn; since the duties engaged to, are, in their own nature, moral and perpetually binding; and since the society, continuing in the succession of its members, is still the same which entered into the engagement? Why should it be reckoned any peculiarity of the Israelites, that the covenant which they swore to God, in the time of Moses, was binding on their posterity; so that in Jeremiah's time, they were spoken of as the same people, who, as a collective body, had said, *Of old time*, at Horeb, and in the plains of Moab, I will *not transgress?** Why should we not allow, that the case is still the same under the New Testament dispensation; and that a covenant of duty, such as the solemn league, having been sworn to God by a particular church, has a peculiar and perpetual obligation on that church?

That this cannot well be denied, appears from the unity of the church of Christ, under the old and new dispensations. The converted Gentiles did not form a new church; but, according to what is declared in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, were ingrafted into the stock of the Jewish church. The church of God still continued the same body; though the Gentiles were added to it, upon the breaking down of the middle wall of partition. Hence, it may be justly concluded, that a particular church under the New Testament, continuing the same in the succession of her members, is as much under a secondary obligation, as Israel was of old, from her covenant engagements, to the same things which she is bound to by the primary obligation of the moral law. So that we may reason to this purpose: The public covenanting, which recognises the relation between God and his people; and also the duties of that relation, is as extensive in its obligation now, under the New Testament, as it was when Israel covenanted at Horeb, and in the plains of Moab. But the obligation of Israel's covenanting then extended not only to the immediate covenanters, but to their posterity: and therefore, the the obligation of the church's covenanting under the New Testament also extends to posterity, or to church members in successive generations.

Alex. According to your opinion, then, the church is still under the obligation of the covenants that were entered into by Israel at Mount Sinai, and in the plains of Moab; under the obligation of the covenants that were entered into in the reigns of Asa and Josiah, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah; and also, under the obligation of all the covenants that have been taken in the church, since the ascension of Christ. How absurd is it to suppose, that we are now under the obligation which the Jews came under to observe the ceremonial and judicial laws? Besides, who can suppose, that every plain christian

* Jerem. ii. 20.

is chargeable with covenant violation, for not fulfilling engagements which he may never have had an opportunity of knowing?

Ruf. I may observe, in the first place, that there never can be any violation of the secondary obligation of these covenants, while there is no violation of the primary obligation of the Divine law; because these covenants bind us to nothing to which we are not previously bound by the Divine law; for the matter engaged to in public covenanting is never, like the matter of the ceremonial vows treated of in the thirtieth chapter of Numbers, something of an indifferent nature; but always something that belongs to moral duty. Hence, it is a vain prejudice against the obligation of such covenants, that christians are embarrassed by the multiplicity of them; and that they would include the obligation of the Jewish covenants to observe the ceremonial and judicial laws. For the public covenants which have been formerly entered into by the church of God, bind us to nothing but moral duty, and to the practice of that duty, according to what the moral law requires in our own situation and circumstances; not according to what was peculiar to those of the church when she entered into such covenants.

In the next place, we ought to have the greatest regard to the solemn covenant engagements as such, that were formerly entered into, by the particular church of which we are members; or from which the ecclesiastical body to which we belong have sprung. The influence of this derivation is, no doubt, diminished; as it is more remote or less known. But the evils of a particular church are always aggravated by their inconsistency with her former covenant engagements.

In the third place, we ought to have more regard to the former covenant engagements of a particular church, the more lately they have been entered into, and the more that the matter of them relates to the present state of the church. Just as the treaty in 1782, acknowledging the independence of the American States, ought to be more regarded by England, than treaties that were made in the reign of Alfred or that of Canute. Thus, there is a special regard which a person owes to the recognition of his covenant relation to God, made by his immediate parents, above what he owes to the recognition of the same thing, which may have been made by his more remote progenitors. Thus, we have a more special call to recognise the obligation of the solemn league and covenant, than that of more ancient covenants: First, because the solemn league includes former covenant engagements, against Heathenism, Judaism, Popery, Arianism, and the like. Secondly, because the evils which occasioned it, and against which it is more especially levelled, are still prevailing—such as the prelacy, the independency in the government of the church; and the superstitious usages in religious worship, abjured in that covenant.

In the fourth place, our regard to the obligation of the former covenant engagements of the church, ought to be such as is adapted to answer the ends of such obligation. The ends for which the continuing obligation of covenant engagements is to be maintained, with regard to posterity, are much the same with the ends for which that obligation is to be maintained, with regard to the immediate covenanters. These ends are, That persons may still find themselves

under an obligation additional, though subordinate, to that of the Divine law; the obligation of an oath, to hold fast all the scriptural reformation which the church has attained; that they may be excited to recognise Jehovah as their covenanted God in Christ; that the existing members of the church may be led to consider themselves as one body with the church of old, and as peculiarly interested in her ancient deliverances; they being, on this account, directed in the Psalms to celebrate the deliverances which the Lord wrought in the days of their fathers, as matters of their own experience: Psal. lxvi. 6, *They went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him;* and, in fine, that they may be deterred from apostacy; an end for which Moses exhorted Israel to remember the obligation of the covenant which they had entered into at Horeb. Now, the nearer that the date of the former covenants of the church is to our own time, affording us an opportunity of being well acquainted with the occasions and consequences of them; and the more that the matter of these covenants refers to particular evils that still prevail, and to particular duties still incumbent on us; the more is a serious and steady regard to the obligation of such covenants adapted to the attainment of such important ends. The truth is, a particular church is degenerating, so far as she declines from a due regard to her own former professions and engagements, while there is nothing found in them but what is agreeable to the word of God.

§ 50 *Alex.* Many suppose, that the English parliament considered their entering into the solemn league, as only a political measure, which was then necessary for supporting their cause against king Charles the first.

Ruf. Whatever motives induced some of those in civil authority to promote the taking of this covenant, it is evident, that the people's entering into it was an act of religious worship. This appears from the Divine warrant, (proved by Mr. Willison and others,) for public covenanting as an ordinance of religious worship;—from the matter of the solemn league, as it was a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, and of allegiance to him; an engagement to endeavour the reformation of religion, and a solemn vow, whereby the swearers bound themselves and their posterity to be the Lord's;—from the immediate end of it; which was, next to the glory of God, the advancement of the spiritual kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ;—and, lastly, from this fact that our ancestors considered it as belonging to the instituted worship of God; as appears from their sermons and other writings concerning it, and from their administration of it on the Lord's day, by the ministers of the gospel, attended with preaching, prayer and fasting.

Alex. Was not this covenant taken by the people according to an act of the English parliament.

Ruf. It was, indeed, taken in consequence of an act of parliament; but this will no more make the people's entering into it a political affair, than the parliament's appointment of the divines to meet at Westminster, made the confession of faith and catechisms, agreed upon by these divines, mere political affairs. The patriotic members of that parliament, were naturally led to appoint the taking of the solemn league and covenant, as a measure peculiarly suitable to the afflicted

state of the nation at that time. But any impropriety, which may be supposed to have been in their act concerning this covenant, would no more alter its nature or obligation, than their appointment of the Lord's supper, to be administered in St. Paul's Church on a certain Sabbath, would have altered the nature or use of that ordinance.

Alex. Was not the taking of the national covenant of Scotland, and of the solemn league, enjoined under civil penalties?

Ruf. I remember, that the supplication of the assembly in the year 1639, requesting the council and parliament to enjoin the national covenant to be taken by all his Majesty's subjects, of what rank or quality soever, *under all civil pains*, was granted. But Mr. Wilson, in his Defence of Reformation Principles,* says, that he heard it affirmed by such as are well acquainted with the Scots law, that when a parliamentary statute, speaks of *all civil pains*, without specifying a particular penalty, the meaning of the phrase is, that the judge is at liberty, in such a case, to proportion the punishment to the nature of the crime, and to the quality of the offender; and therefore, when the covenant was enjoined under *all civil pains*, no more was intended, than that the refuser should not be admitted to any public office or trust. Accordingly in the act of the parliament in 1640, ratifying the covenant, after the expression *all civil pains*, it is subjoined, "And also, the parliament ordains, that the covenant be publicly read and sworn by the whole members of parliament, claiming voice therein; and that the refusers to subscribe and swear the same, shall have no place or voice in the parliament."† Nor does there appear to be any other disadvantage to which the refusers of the solemn league and covenant were subjected by the English parliament. In our times, we are apt to think, that this was too much; but we ought to consider, what was certainly fact, that scarcely any, at that time, refused to subscribe these covenants, but such as were determined enemies to the cause of civil liberty; and that therefore, it would have then been inconsistent with an honest and faithful adherence to that cause, to admit such to any office of trust or power. After all, we have no instance of any who were imprisoned, banished, or even fined, for simply refusing the covenants. But whatever may be said of the proceedings of the civil authority in this matter, it remains a certain truth, that the taking of the national covenant by the members of the parliament, and by the generality of the people of Scotland, was a solemn deed, which laid the nation under an obligation, which no human power or authority can ever annul. Nor is the obligation less permanent, which arose from the taking of the solemn league and covenant.

§ 51. *Alex.* It is acknowledged on all hands, and by the Seceders themselves, that the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the three nations, in the terms wherein they were first sworn, are not suitable to the present state of these nations, on account of the various revolutions which have taken place there: Accordingly, the associate presbytery, about eight or nine

* Pages 298, 299.

† Here, as Mr. Paxton observes, in his Inquiry into the Obligation of Covenants on Posterity, page 104, the formidable expression, "all civil pains," sinks into the recusant's having no place nor voice in parliament. Not a word of fines, confiscations or imprisonment.

years after its erection, new-moulded these covenants into what they called a bond, adapted to their own circumstances, condensing the matter of their former covenant in some things, and enlarging it in others.

Ruf. Though it is granted, that the circumstances of the church of Christ in Britain and Ireland, are different from what they were when these covenants were first sworn, this will not appear to militate against the continuing obligation of them on the people there; when we consider that the duties engaged to in these covenants, are no other than those required in the law of God; and that, as his law does not bind men to any other practice of these duties, than that which their present circumstances admit and give occasion for; so, neither do these covenants bind to any other. In this sense, the faithful confessors and martyrs, in the reign of Charles the second, when their situation was greatly altered from what it had been in the covenanting period, held these covenants to be as obligatory on Scotland, as they had been in the day on which they were sworn.

In the same sense, the associate presbytery, in their bond, recognised the continuing obligation of these covenants, specifying a variety of the truths and ordinances of God, as belonging to that reformation, to which they were bound in their present circumstances, not only by the primary obligation of the Divine law, but also, by the superadded tie of these covenants. Hence it appears, that the bond in which the associate presbytery professed to renew these covenants, was according to the continuing obligation of them. It was also according to the examples recorded in scripture, of Israel's renewing their covenant with the Lord. So, in the time of Asa, the covenant engagement which the people entered into, was expressly pointed against idolatry; in the time of Ezra, against the unlawful marriages of the Israelites with the people of the land; and, in the time of Nehemiah, against buying on the Sabbath the wares or victuals which the people offered to sell on that holy day, and against the rigorous exaction of debts. Yet their covenanting in these instances was only a renovation of the covenant which Israel had entered into in the time of Moses. I may add, that the associate presbytery's manner of renewing these covenants, was according to the example of the church of Scotland in her reforming times. In this manner, the reformers of Scotland, in the year 1638, renewed the national covenant according to their circumstances.

The king, by a proclamation, required the national covenant to be renewed in a repetition of the same form of words in which it had been renewed in the year 1590. But the reformers firmly opposed this requisition. They pleaded, that the bond which they had framed and sworn, was a necessary explication of the former covenant, and an application of it to their then present circumstances; while it was still substantially the same with the former covenant, and a renovation of it. I may read an extract of their words: "What is the use of "march-stones upon the borders of lands: the like use have confes-"sions of faith in the kirk, to disterminate and divide between truth "and error; and the renewing and applying of confessions of faith to "the present errors and corruptions, are not unlike the riding of

"marches. And therefore to content ourselves with the general, and "to return to it from the particular application of the confession, ne-"cessarily made, upon the invasion or creeping in of errors within the "borders of the kirk; if it be not a removing of the march-stone from "its own place; it is at least the hiding of it in the ground, that it "may not be seen; which at this time were very unreasonable." And in another of their reasons, speaking concerning the sameness of the national covenant, with their new bond, they say, "There is no sub-"stantial difference between that which we have now subscribed and "the confession subscribed in the year 1580, more than there is be-"tween that which is hid and that which is revealed; between a "march-stone hid in the ground, and one uncovered; between the "hand closed and open; between the sword sheathed and drawn."

In like manner, the assembly in 1648, appointed the renovation of the solemn league, with a new acknowledgment of sins and engagement to duties, as the associate presbytery have done.

Hence, it is evident, that a new bond, or what you call a new moulding of the national covenant, or the solemn league, agreeably to the spirit and design of them, is so far from being against a real renovation of these covenants, that, on the contrary, it is the only way of renewing them in reality, and without dissimulation. For these covenants cannot oblige posterity to hold the truth, or to practise the duty therein mentioned, otherwise than according to the circumstances in which they come to be placed by Divine Providence.*

* To the same purpose, with what is here advanced on the continuing obligation of the covenants of our ancestors, and on the manner of renewing them in a bond adapted to our present circumstances, are the words of an excellent paper, said to have been written by the Rev. William Logan, in the year 1806, a little before his death; and intended to have been communicated to the Associate Reformed Synod. Whether it has ever been communicated to that reverend body, is unknown to the writer of these Dialogues; but as he received it through a channel, which leaves him no room to doubt of its genuineness; as it is the testimony of a pious and judicious minister, given at the close of life, to a very important article of the cause of God; and as the publication of it is both honourable to that minister, and agreeable to his intention; it is hoped, that the candid reader will be gratified by the following extract.

"My bodily infirmities not permitting me to attend the meeting of synod, I thought "proper to signify my views to the rev. synod, relative to their minute on the head of "public covenanting at New-York, 1802, in which it is asserted, *That it is not possible to "make these covenants, as they stand, part of the church's testimony in America. To "be at all applicable to the circumstances of this church, they must undergo a variety "of alterations; but the moment that any alteration is introduced into an instrument of "solemn compact, it ceases to be the same instrument.* Concerning this, it may be ob-"served, that in a civil contract, indeed, if one party give up with or break the compact, "the other party is freed from the obligation:—But these solemn covenants of our an-"cestors or predecessors in the church, were engagements to *the Most High God*, as "well as to one another; in which the party vowing or swearing, came under an obliga-"tion to all the duties, they owed to God and man.

"These are the terms of the national covenant of Scotland, as renewed in the year "1638; and also of the solemn league. That God was the Great Party sworn to, was "evident from the nature of these covenants, and the terms in which they were expressed. "Mr. Case, in his first sermon at the taking of the solemn league, says, *The parties "striking this covenant, are God and his people. What is it then, think ye; when a "king, yea, kingdoms on one side, and the Great God on the other, swear mutually to "one another?* Again; *Beloved Christians, this is the end of covenants and oaths be-"tween God and his people, viz. to unite and secure the one to the other.* Covenants of "that kind descend, in their obligation, to posterity; which is acknowledged by synod, as "to the religious parts of these covenants: and Mr. Case further says, concerning the "solemn league, *There is nothing in the body of this covenant, which is not either purely "religious, or has a tendency to religion, conducing to the securing and promoting thereof.*

§ 52. *Alex.* Why do the Seceders insist so much on public covenanting? Are we not sufficiently bound by the law of God to hold fast our profession, and to continue in the practice of our duty?

"Such covenants are obligatory on the posterity of them who entered into them, wherever "scattered over the world, even in virtue of the solemn public oaths of their ancestors; "that is, to the discharge of all the moral duties contained in them, according to the calls "of word and Providence, and the opportunities laid to their hand. If there are duties "mentioned in these covenants, which, in our situation and circumstances (such as those "respecting the king and parliament) we have not a call or opportunity of discharging, "in that case, we are not bound: these relations are now dead to us in America; and "when the relation ceases, the duties formerly due to that relation cease. The law of "God binds no farther than to the duties of the relation and circumstances in which a "man is placed. But though we are not to consider ourselves bound by these covenants "to some of the things mentioned, for the reason just now given, this cannot annul the "obligation we are under, by virtue of these covenants, to promote the reformation "cause in the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the Presbyterian church, "of which we are a branch. These covenants, by a very small explication, might easily "apply to the case of the church in America. To modify them in this manner, I would "suppose, is not to destroy them; but to reduce them to practice. The substance of "explicit church covenanting, is the avouching of the Lord to be our God and the God of "our seed, solemnly devoting ourselves and our posterity to him, promising and solemnly "swearing in the strength of his grace to walk in his ways, to keep his commandments, "and to hearken to his voice; and at the same time, explicitly promising the discharge "of the duties which are in a special manner called for at our hand, and testifying against "the errors and corruptions which may be most prevalent, and from which we may be "in the greatest danger. It would, indeed, be dreadful in us to swear these covenants "in the same terms in which they were expressed in the time of our ancestors: this "would be to swear to the discharge of the duties of the time past; of the duties which "are not required at our hand; and for which we have neither grace promised, nor op-"portunity of performing. When we covenant with God and with one another, we ought "to engage to the discharge of the duties of our own situation and circumstances; and, in "so doing, it may well enough be said, that we are renewing covenant with God; because "it would be an application of a former engagement, or our acting upon the obligation "we are already under, of acknowledging the Lord to be our God, and promising the "discharge of the duties we are already bound to perform, by virtue of the solemn oath "of our ancestors or predecessors in the church; as, on this account, we are not in the "same situation with a people, who neither in their own persons, nor in the loins of their "ancestors are, in this explicit manner, under an obligation to this effect. For proof, "that this was the sense in which our ancestors understood the work of covenanting "among them, we need only refer to their acts and deeds in relation to it. President "Edwards expresses himself to the same purpose, concerning the Jews in the time of "Nehemiah. *After this*, says he, *having separated themselves from all strangers, they "solemnly observed a fast by hearing the word of God, confessing their sins, and re-"newing their covenant with God. A church in this situation, supposed covenanting "with God; a recognising the obligation, they were previously under, to obedience.* "For my part, I cannot view the matter in any other light, without endeavouring to deny "or conceal the former obligation. The form of the covenant, in respect of the words, "may be called another; but not in respect of the substance: for the substance of the "church's testimony is the same in all periods of it. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the "Lord, that I am God.* Mr. Calamy, on this head, expresses himself to the same pur-"pose, in his sermon at the taking of the solemn league. He observes, that *the Israelites "had not only a covenant of circumcision, but renewed a covenant at Horeb and at "Moab; and again and again bound themselves to the Lord by vow and covenant. "And thus, in the church of Christ, christians, besides their vow in baptism, have many "national and personal engagements to perform unto God by covenant; which is "nothing else but the renovation and particular application of the first vow in baptism. "Their after covenanting must be a renovation of their former covenanting, though "expressed in words accommodated to their present situation and circumstances.*

"If the obligation of the covenants of our ancestors cannot be owned for substance, "when the situation of the church and particular church members are such that they "have not an opportunity of discharging some duties in them through a change of cir-"cumstances; what must have been the state of the martyrs under Charles the second "and James the second, when they became persecutors and tyrants. Numbers of those "heroic confessors of the truth disowned the authority of these persecutors and tyrants; "and at the same time owned the obligation of their covenants for reformation, and sealed

Ruf. It might as well be asked, why is an oath, by which witnesses in civil courts engage to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth, insisted on? For they are under the highest obligation to do so from the law of God. It is true, nothing can be added to the obligation of the Divine law in point of authority: but the obligation of an oath is of another kind, and is appointed by the Divine law itself, as a proper means of impressing the mind with a deeper sense of its authority and obligation.

The public and joint engagement of church members to adhere to the truths and ordinances of Christ, is one of the appointed means of promoting their steadfastness, amidst manifold temptations to lukewarmness and wavering. Hence the Israelites were solemnly charged to "*remember the day on which they stood before the Lord in Horeb,*" as a preservative against relapsing into idolatry.*

In public covenanting, a professing people declare in the most express and solemn manner, that Jehovah is their God. They avouch

"their testimony with their blood: though they declared, that they were not under an "obligation from these covenants to defend the king or to maintain the privileges of the "parliament, when both were prostituting the power, they claimed, to the destruction of "true religion, and of the liberty of the subject."

Mr. Logan, having thus shewn how the covenants of our ancestors or predecessors in the church ought to be renewed, gives it as his judgement, that the practice of public covenanting is seasonable at present, and confirms this judgement by various weighty reasons.

"I confess," says he, "I cannot give a satisfactory answer to such as inquire why the "synod does not proceed to public explicit covenanting with God. Public covenanting is "a duty suited to every generation of church members. *Vow and pay unto the Lord*, is "an express precept. But if this duty is to be omitted, except in very singular emergen-"cies of the church, or what church officers deem to be such; it may not be attended to "for many generations; though still confessed to be a moral duty. Public covenanting "has been eminently countenanced by God, and been a singular mean of bringing about "a revival in the churches. It was the glory of the British and of the Irish Presbyterian "churches. It is a duty which many professors of religion seem industriously to shun. "But, in so doing, they are far from being suitably exercised. It is a duty as really be-"longing to the church as baptism and the Lord's supper; and bears a special reference "to the covenant of grace. Deut. xxvi. 17. *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be "thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments and "his judgements, and to hearken to his voice.* We ought to avouch the Lord to be our "God, with all the solemnity possible; even with the solemnity of an oath. This appears "from precepts, promises and prophecies of scripture, and from reason. That it is sea-"sonable at this time, appears from various considerations. Temptations are many and "strong, whereby professors of religion are in hazard. Infidelity and irreligion are pre-"valent. Heresies and delusions abound, whereby the doctrines of the gospel are clouded. "There appears to be a general restraint of the influences of the Holy Spirit. The Lord "has been justly displeased: we, with our fathers, have sinned; therefore, we ought to "turn unto the Lord. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be "forgotten. If it be objected, that we profess the truth at large in our systems of truth; "to this it may be answered, that we do not confess in as explicit a manner as we are "warranted to do, even with the solemnity of an oath; nor are we giving others that "assurance which we have in our power to do: an oath for confirmation is to men an "end of all strife: nor do we honour God so explicitly as we might by solemn explicit "covenanting, in confessing the being, the perfections, the cause and interest of the living "God."

From this extract it appears, that this pious minister died a hearty friend to a testimony for the obligation of the covenants of our forefathers on posterity, and for the seasonableness of public covenanting in the present day. To this case, the words of the poet are applicable:

A death-bed's a detector of the heart.

YOUNG.

* Deut. iv. 9, 10.

him to be their God* upon the ground of his promise, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* They acknowledge, in this peculiarly solemn and impressive manner, their new covenant relation to God in Christ, both as the most engaging motive to obedience, and as the most powerful plea, that they can use in prayer.

Public covenanting is an eminent mean of promoting mutual confidence among people engaged in the same cause. It is the native expression of zeal for the truths and ways of Christ; particularly, when they meet with remarkable opposition. Some have represented covenanting as tending to discourage free inquiry in matters of religion. But the truth is, it excites christians to search the scriptures: for when they are convinced that it is their duty to promise, with the solemnity of an oath, a steadfast adherence to the various articles of their religious profession, they find, that if they would not awfully profane the name of God, by swearing ignorantly or falsely, they must have a clear and distinct understanding of these articles, as contained in the word of God.

Our joining in public covenanting, has a manifest tendency to give the world in general, and especially other churches, a deep impression of the importance of those truths, that are specified or particularly referred to, in our solemn engagement. Who can read or hear the declaration of one of the ancient fathers, Gregory Nazianzen, concerning his belief of the doctrine of the Trinity, without being affected with the infinite importance of that doctrine?

"By the eternal Word I swear, even by that great Divinity, who, "being the brightness of his Father's glory, and in nature equal to "him, came down to us from his eternal kingdom. I solemnly swear, "that I will never embrace any evil opinion, repugnant to the truth; "that I will never exchange the true God for another—particularly, "the eternal Word for one of inferior dignity; and that, by no appli-"cation, shall I ever be induced to divide the Divine honour due to "the ever blessed Trinity."†

Hence, public covenanting is a proper mean of handing down to posterity, what the church of Christ has attained in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, as a sacred trust to future generations.

In fine, public covenanting has been eminently countenanced by Heaven. It has been attended by the remarkable outpouring of the Divine Spirit. Mr. Livingston was an eye-witness of the covenanting of Scotland, in the year 1638. "I was present," says he, "at "Lanerk, and in several other parishes, when on a Sabbath, after the "forenoon's sermon, the covenant was read and sworn:—And I may "truly say, that in all my life-time, excepting one day at the kirk of "Shots, I never saw such motions from the Spirit of God; the people "generally and most willingly concurring. I have seen more than a "thousand persons, all at once, lifting up their hands, and the tears "falling down from their eyes."‡

This work went on prosperously, though there were many adversaries, till the friends of reformation saw the good cause, for

* Deut. xxvi. 17.

† As quoted by Voetius, Theolog. Disput. selectis, parte prima, page 484.

‡ See Mr. Livingston's Memoirs.

which they had suffered long, acknowledged, in the swearing of the solemn league and covenant, by persons of all ranks in the three kingdoms.

§ 53. *Alex.* Do not mistake me, as if I were an enemy to covenanting. No, I think it both a duty and a privilege, when rightly performed, and in agreeableness to the word of God. But I reprobate the new oath and covenant of the associate presbytery, which I mentioned before; because, as Mr. Willison declares, in the appendix to his Testimony, having adopted and approved a confession of sins, prefixed to it, they swore by the great name of the Lord God, with their hands lifted up to the Lord, that they will testify against the evils named in that confession;—while thousands join in their oath, who cannot say, that they know the truth of many things contained in that confession of sins, from their own proper knowledge: but only have them from hearsay, or by information from others; and yet they must swear to the truth of them as fully, as if they had been eye or ear witnesses of them, or had read all the histories concerning them. Now, what is this, but to make people swear rashly or inconsiderately, or upon implicit faith?

Ruf. This, I know, is a common objection against the bond agreed on by the associate presbytery. I have often heard it repeated, as if it demonstrated the Seceders to be perjured. But for my own part, I could never see it in any other light, than as a remarkable instance of the power of prejudice. In other cases, every one must allow the supposition, on which this objection proceeds, to be most absurd. If a minister, for example, mentions the sickness of a person in the public prayers, whilst he knows nothing of the person's case, but by the information of one who desires him to be recommended in the public prayers, the minister is just in as great danger of the guilt of lying to the congregation, and even to his Maker, as a swearer of the bond above-mentioned, is in of perjury. Nay, is not his danger far greater? because he has not such testimony to proceed upon, nor such opportunity of deliberation, as the swearer of that bond must be acknowledged to have.

Again, when a person comes forward to partake of the Lord's supper, it is allowed, that he renews his baptismal engagements; and his doing so, implies a confession of his breaches of these engagements. Now, supposing him to belong to a church that practises infant baptism; he may be in the same danger with the swearer of the bond in question; since he may know nothing of his own baptism, but by the information of others? As the Lord, in the second commandment, threatens to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation; so the children, in these generations, are to confess their own iniquities, and those of their fathers.*

But, according to the principle of this objection, we are not to give glory to God, by confessing the iniquity of our fathers, or even that of others in our own day, unless we have been eye and ear witnesses of it. At this rate, there is no worshipping assembly that can warrantably join in the confession of the public sins of the former, or even of the present generation: for it is not supposable, that all the

* Levit. xxvi. 40.

individuals of such an assembly have been eye and ear witnesses of every public sin. After all, it is a bare-faced falsehood, that, in confessing public sins, or in engaging to contend and testify against them, it is at all intended to ascertain the truth of the facts, as in the depositions of witnesses. In this case, as in the public prayers for the sick, in a person's professing to renew his baptismal engagements at the Lord's table, and in similar cases, the truth of the facts is proceeded upon, as what is otherwise sufficiently ascertained.

The professions, which we make on such occasions, respect our duty with regard to the facts, on the supposition that they exist. We have a Divine warrant for considering the testimony of other men as a sufficient ground to proceed upon in most important duties: *In the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established.** With regard to the reference in the bond to the preceding confession of sins, it is surely agreeable to the general tenor of scripture, that, having confessed public sins, we should resolve, through grace, to contend and testify against them; and that, having acknowledged the necessity of reformation in various instances, we should engage, in our several places and stations, to promote that reformation.

The covenant, which was entered into in Nehemiah's time, had a like reference to a preceding acknowledgment of sins, which concludes with these words; "*Because of all this, we make a sure covenant.*"† Such a reference to evils confessedly prevailing, belonged to the bond, by which the national covenant of Scotland was renewed in the year 1638. There is a passage to the same purpose in the engagement to duties, which was used in the renewing of the solemn league and covenant, by the people of Scotland, in the year 1648.‡ But it is probable, that the two last mentioned examples of public covenanting, will soon be forgotten amongst us; as in our new edition of the Westminster confession, the copies of these public deeds, which used to be annexed to that confession, are left out. In this designed omission, we have acted, I fear, more like the foes than the friends of public covenanting; with whatever forwardness some of us may profess to think it both a duty and a privilege.

There can be no ground for alleging, that they who entered into the bond, proposed by the associate presbytery, did so rashly, inconsiderately, or upon implicit faith, on account of the reference in it to the preceding confession of public evils; unless we can suppose, that they had no opportunity of being acquainted with such human testimony, concerning the existence of these evils, as may warrantably be proceeded upon in such cases. But no such supposition can be justly made, with regard to facts which might easily be found in the most public and authentic histories and records of the kingdom. Nay, the most serious people in Scotland, lovers of the covenanted reformation, had been complaining, for many years before, of the very evils that are enumerated in the associate presbytery's confession of sins.

* Deut. xxvii. 6. 2 Corinth. xiii. 1. † Nehem. ix. 38.

‡ The words of the passage referred to, are as follows:—"Because it is needful, for "those who find mercy, not only to confess, but also, to forsake their sin: therefore, that "the reality and sincerity of our repentance may appear, we do resolve, and solemnly "engage ourselves before the Lord, carefully to avoid, for the time to come, all these "offences, whereof we have now made solemn public acknowledgment."

Besides, when it is proposed to set about covenanting in any particular congregation of the Secession, a public intimation of it is made a considerable time before; during which time, various meetings of *session* are held, for conversing with and receiving such as offer themselves to join in the bond.

Alex. Mr. Willison asserts, that some articles of the associate presbytery's acknowledgment of public sins, are false in fact, calumnious, unjust and uncharitable.*

Ruf. He has indeed quoted some articles of that acknowledgment, which, he says, are instances of falsehood. But his publishing this assertion without any reason or proof, was not doing justice either to the associate presbytery or to his readers. The associate presbytery state most of these instances more fully, and give the grounds of their statement in the Judicial Testimony; and if there had been any falsehood in their statement, Mr. Willison might have easily detected it in a satisfactory manner. This he has not done. We have, however, examined every one of his instances; and have found no reason to charge the associate presbytery with falsehood, or any sort of misrepresentation.

Alex. Supposing the facts stated in the associate presbytery's confession of sins were sufficiently ascertained; they are, in a great measure, antiquated, and have comparatively little influence on present conduct.

Ruf. As the Lord threatens to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, so people are called to confess the iniquity of their fathers; that is, not only of their immediate parents, but of their other predecessors in the particular church of which they are members.† In the prayers of God's people, recorded in scripture, we find them often confessing the sins of their fathers. *We have sinned*, says the church, *with our fathers.*‡ *For our sin*, says Daniel, *and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.*|| On occasion of the covenanting in Nehemiah's time, many sins of Israel were confessed, as having then great influence on the state of the church, though they had been committed a thousand years before.—Whereas, the date of the first of the public sins of the church of Scotland, specified in the associate presbytery's acknowledgment, was not an hundred years before the framing of that acknowledgment. The view we took, in a former conversation, of these public evils, as they are stated in the judicial testimony, leads us to consider them as having great influence upon the conduct of the present generation. For example, the laxness, which now prevails with regard to church communion, was begun among presbyterians, in the public resolutions, in the acceptance of indulgencies, and other sinful compliances with the civil powers: the denial of the obligation of the covenants, entered into for the advancement of religion and reformation, was begun; first, in various backsliding courses, contrary to these engagements; and then, in the acts rescissory, declaring them treasonable. It is easy to trace the connexion of other public evils, mentioned in the presbytery's acknowledgment of sins, with various corruptions in the present day. No length of time will free a church or nation from the guilt of such

* Imp. Test. page 231. † Levit. xxvi. 40. ‡ Psal. cvi. 6. || Dan. ix. 16.

public evils, without a public acknowledgment of them, and humiliation on account of them. The long neglect of these duties, instead of lessening, increases the guilt; and being persisted in, will provoke Jehovah to come out of his place to inflict exemplary punishment, when the earth will *disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain.** The Lord brought ruin upon Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for what Manasseh had done an hundred years before that catastrophe.† It is impious to represent such public evils as antiquated facts, as, on account of their date, no more causes of God's wrath, no more grounds of humiliation. According to this supposition, if God should visit the iniquity of our fathers upon the present generation, he would be dealing unjustly! It should be considered, that God punishes the sins of individuals, or lets them pass with impunity in the present life, as he sees proper for his own glory. It is chiefly in a future state that he will reckon with them in that capacity. But the case is otherwise with churches and nations. They have only a temporal existence. And therefore the honor of God, as the moral Governor of the world, requires that churches and nations, persisting obstinately in open impiety, should be punished in the present life.

§ 54. *Alex.* Mr. Willison says, that in the oath and covenant of the associate presbytery, there are some things ambiguous, obscure and doubtful, which great numbers of the takers know not the meaning of; and so cannot swear in judgement and in righteousness: as, for instance, when they abjure independency and latitudinarian tenets: these are words very general, dark and dubious, to which the imposers may affix any meaning they think proper.‡

Ruf. It would, no doubt, be a sufficient objection against the bond of the associate presbytery, if the terms, in which it is expressed, had no certain determinate sense. The end of an oath is to take away or prevent controversy: but such ambiguity would rather occasion it. It appears, however, to have been the plainness and simplicity of the terms, used in the bond of the associate presbytery, that offended Mr. Willison and others. If, instead of *independency and latitudinarian tenets*, the associate presbytery had only said, errors *with regard to church government*, they would perhaps have escaped Mr. Willison's censure, which you have now recited; but the expression would have been much more general and indeterminate; according less with the faithfulness, which they studied, to God and to the souls of men, than the terms they have used. We find the word *Independency*, among other terms, denoting erroneous schemes contrary to the purity of religion, in the acknowledgment of sins and the engagement to duties, with which the solemn league and covenant was renewed in Scotland, in the year 1648.‖

Besides, the associate presbytery had shewn, in what sense they understood this term, in the following words of the introduction to their Declaration and Testimony: "They judged it necessary to "enter into a presbyterial association, not only for maintaining that

* Isai. xxvi. 21. † 2 Kings xxiii. 26. ‡ Imp. Test. page 223.

‖ The words of that engagement are these: "The securing and preserving the pu-"rity of religion against all error, heresy and schism, namely, Independency, Anabap-"tism, Antinomianism, Arminianism and Erastianism, shall be studied and endeavoured "by us."

"order among themselves, which is required by the word of God; but "also, to distinguish themselves from those of the sectarian and independent way, who lodge the keys of government and discipline in "the whole community of the faithful."

With regard to latitudinarian tenets, the presbytery have declared what they meant, when they say, in the acknowledgment of sins, "That by these tenets, any particular form of church government is "denied to be of Divine institution; and under a pretence of catholic "love, a scheme is laid for uniting parties of all denominations in "church communion, in a way destructive of any testimony for the "declarative glory of Immanuel, as Head and King of Zion, and for "the covenanted reformation of this church and land:" and when they say, in another paragraph of the same acknowledgment, "That "by latitudinarian, independent and sectarian extremes, the unity of "the true catholic church is denied; the presbyterial order and government, the only government which Christ has instituted in his "house, is subverted; and the warrantableness and great design of "confessions of faith and catechisms, as tests of soundness in the "faith, is overthrown."

Alex. Mr. Willison adds, I am sure, there are many valuable ministers of Jesus Christ, and precious sons of Zion, whom Christ honours and admits to near communion with himself, who will not venture to swear such an oath.*

Ruf. And what then? Does it necessarily follow, that the swearing of such an oath is sinful? There are precious ministers and sons of Zion, who will not venture to subscribe the Westminster confession of faith and the form of presbyterial church government. But it will not certainly follow, that the subscription of these subordinate standards is sinful; for there are no less precious ministers and sons of Zion, who hold such a subscription, in the present state of the visible church, to be their indispensable duty. The truth is, the most eminent men are to be followed no farther than they follow Christ.

§ 55. *Alex.* The associate presbytery have been greatly censured for their act, dated at Edinburgh, February 14th, 1744; in which they agree and determine, that the swearing of the foresaid covenant should be the term of ministerial communion with them; and likewise the term of christian communion to the people, with respect to their partaking of the seals of God's covenant. A surprising act, indeed, exclaims Mr. Willison. It is a term of the brethren's making; for which they have no warrant in God's word. It is a manifest usurpation and encroachment upon the Headship of the King of Zion; and an infringement of that precious article of our creed, *the communion of saints.*†

Ruf. I shall read you the words of the presbytery's act. "They "did agree, resolve and determine, that the renovation of the national "covenant of Scotland, and of the solemn league and covenant of the "three nations, in the manner now agreed upon and proposed by the "presbytery, shall be the term of ministerial communion with the "presbytery; and likewise of christian communion, in the admission "of people to sealing ordinances; secluding therefrom, all opposers, "slighters and contemners of the said renovation of our covenants;

* Imp. Test. page 223. † Ibid. pages 220, 221.

"or such as, after deliberate pains taken for their information, with "all due meekness and patience, shall be found, by the session or "superior judicatories, to which they are subject, to be neglecters "and shifters of this important moral duty; or not to be, themselves, "in the due use of means, for light and satisfaction about it."

Mr. Willison represents this as a term of the brethren's own making; for which they have no warrant in God's word. In order to prove this assertion, it would have been necessary to shew, with regard to the matter or the manner of their covenanting, that it is something not required in the word of God.

With regard to the *matter* of their bond or covenant, as comprehending a testimony against various public evils and grounds of God's controversy with the church and nation, Mr. Willison, indeed, condemns several articles of the presbytery's acknowledgment of these evils; but we have seen, that in doing so, he is neither consistent with the truth, nor with himself. And supposing such evils to have really taken place—nothing is more evident, than that the scripture requires us to mourn for them, and testify against them. Ministers ought to lift up their voice like a trumpet, and shew the professing people of God their transgressions. Those whom the Lord marks for safety in an evil day, are such as sigh and mourn for the abominations done in the midst of the land. It was the practice of the prophets under the Old Testament dispensation, and of Christ and his apostles under the New, to testify against the errors and corruptions that prevailed in their times. Their example, in this respect, is undoubtedly for our imitation. And here, it is necessary to observe, that such is the perfection of the holy scriptures, that they are not more against the errors and corruptions of the periods in which they were first written, than they are against those of every subsequent period. They no less require us to condemn the compliance of the ministers of the church of Scotland with the acts of Parliament, concerning the oath of abjuration, and concerning patronages, than to condemn the compliance of the ten tribes of Israel with Jeroboam's command to worship the calves of Dan and Bethel. They bind us to abhor the sin of the church of Scotland, in suffering the errors of Mr. Simson and Mr. Campbell to pass without due censure, as well as to abhor the iniquity of the church of Thyatira, in suffering the woman Jezebel to teach and seduce the Lord's servants.

How absurd is it to charge ministers with making new terms of communion, for no other reason than this; that they make a just and necessary application of God's word, to various cases of error and corruption that take place in their own times; and that they refuse to admit such persons to sealing ordinances as avow their obstinate attachment to opinions and practices which are just as contrary to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as those of Hymenus and Philetus, or of any other false teachers in the times of the apostles. It is most evident, that Mr. Willison has not pointed out any thing in the matter of the associate presbytery's bond or acknowledgment of sins, that can, in the least degree, serve to support the charge he brings against them, of requiring terms of communion which Christ does not require in his word, or of determining any thing to be sin or duty, which he has not made so.

Nor was there any thing in *the manner* of their covenanting, which afforded Mr. Willison a pretence for this charge. He himself, as we have seen, has proved by various places of scripture, that public covenanting is a duty of the church under the New Testament dispensation. We cannot suppose, that Mr. Willison would object against the associate presbytery, because, in their covenanting, they proposed to renew the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the three nations; since he intimates, in his account of the settlement of religion, after the revolution by the accession of William, Prince of Orange, to the British throne, that it would have been desirable, that the obligation of these covenants had been then asserted, and that they had been then renewed. Nor could Mr. Willison oppose the only rational way of renewing these covenants; that is, the renewing of them in a *bond*, like that of the associate presbytery, in which they adapted these covenant engagements to the present circumstances of the church: for he wishes that they had been renewed at the revolution, in the way of accommodation to the circumstances of the church at that time.* So that it does not appear that any thing was meant by this term of communion, as stated by the associate presbytery, which Mr. Willison could consistently deny to be commanded duty. Nor could there be any infringement of the communion of saints by secluding from sealing ordinances the opposers, the slighters and contemners of this commanded duty. By doing so, instead of usurping or incroaching upon the Headship of the King of Zion, they displayed a commendable zeal against such as were openly justifying the flagrant instances of usurpation and incroachment on his Headship, specified in the presbytery's declinature. Nor was their zeal carried to any extreme. They declared, that much tenderness is to be used with the weakest of Christ's flock, who are lying open to light, and desiring to come forward to the discharge of their duty. Such are to be waited for, till they willingly offer themselves. None are to be excluded from sealing ordinances, but such as are found, after deliberate pains have been taken for their information, with all due meekness and patience, to be neglecters of this *important moral duty*, and not to be seriously in the use of means for light and satisfaction on this point.

Alex. The associate presbytery seem to be chargeable in this part of their act with inconsistency. They call the swearing of their new covenant an *important moral duty;* and yet they pretend to dispense with the omission of it in some of their people for a time.

Ruf. You have acknowledged public covenanting to be both a duty and a privilege; and yet you have relinquished the practice of it, and have given up the prospect, for any thing that appears, of ever setting about it, or joining in it. Is not this far more inconsistent than it was for the associate presbytery to exercise forbearance towards some of their people who, though they were not prepared to enter into the bond, were neither opposing this important moral duty, nor neglecting the due use of means for obtaining light and satisfaction about it.

* Imp. Test. page 59.

Some who believe public covenanting to be a *moral duty*, and to be seasonable at present, may be in doubt as to their personal fitness or preparation for entering into the bond. This seems to have been chiefly the case contemplated by the presbytery in the clause, you refer to, in their act. The observation of due order, is indeed of great importance in the discharge of religious duties. For the neglect of such order, David acknowledged, that the Lord had made a breach upon his people, in the death of Uzzah. Those in Nehemiah's time, who joined in public covenanting, were such as *had knowledge and understanding*;* this qualification being necessary to a swearing, *The Lord liveth, in truth, in righteousness, and in judgement.* Generally speaking, the same qualifications are necessary to a right participation of the Lord's supper. But in order to the swearing and subscribing of a *particular* bond or covenant engagement, it is obvious, that persons ought to have a distinct understanding of the terms in which it is expressed; and of every particular which it specifies, as well as of its general nature and design.

Hence, the usual practice before mentioned, of intimating publicly the design of covenanting in any particular congregation a considerable time before its transaction, and of appointing various meetings of session for conversing with and receiving such as offer themselves to join in that work. Thus the associate presbytery was led to consider, that there might be some persons in their congregations, who would decline entering into the *bond*, on a particular occasion, for want of competent information; who were not slighters, or contemners of covenanting; who adhered to the testimony in the hands of the presbytery; and, therefore, were not to be secluded from sealing ordinances.

Alex. Mr. Willison observes farther, that the associate presbytery call their new oath and covenant, not *a term*, but *the term* of christian communion; as if it were the only qualification for admission required, and as if it answered for the want of others. By this new act, let a man be ever so well qualified, according to the *terms* which Christ hath determined; yet, if he has not freedom to go into this term, he must be excluded both from ministerial and christian communion.

Ruf. Mr. Willison ought to have said, qualified according to the *other* terms which Christ hath determined: for that covenanting is one of *these terms*, he could not deny, consistently with his own confession, that it is one of the things which Christ hath commanded us. And we have seen, that he has not pointed out one thing taught or inculcated by the associate presbytery, that is really different from what Christ taught and inculcated. And would not our Lord Jesus and his apostles have refused to admit persons to sealing ordinances, who were open opposers, slighters or contemners of any one thing that Christ had really commanded, however well qualified they might be in other respects?

With regard to the expression, *the term of communion*, while it is very unjustly and invidiously represented as implying, that the terms which Christ has determined were not so much observed by these ministers, as this; it is but fair to read to you a passage, which contains

* Nehem. x.

the associate presbytery's reason why they use it in this act. "This "determination, the presbytery judge agreeable to the word of God, "to the principles of this church, and to the duty of the Lord's rem-"nant in these lands. They consider it as a proper stand against the "grievous and growing course of defection, by the present generation "in these lands, from the truths, cause and institutions of Christ, "revealed in his holy word, and maintained in our reformation stand-"ards; as also, against the dreadful prevalence of latitudinarian "principles, for uniting persons of all denominations in church com-"munion, to the overthrow of the government of Christ's house, and "to the manifest prejudice of all his precious truths. It is, in reality, "a proper and steadfast adherence to the unerring rule of faith and "manners, in opposition to the various deviations therefrom in our "day, that is by the said act made *the term* of communion; and con-"sequently, no other term of communion is thereby imposed, than "what the alone Lord of the conscience has prescribed: while the "proposed renovation of our solemn covenants is to be considered, "not as one particular duty made the term of communion exclusively "of or preferably to others; but as the general and seasonable form "of avouching all the principles and duties of our holy profession."*

Besides, this act of the associate presbytery is not unprecedented in the church of Scotland: it is similar to the act of the commission of the general assembly, for the solemn receiving, swearing and subscribing the solemn league and covenant, passed at Edinburgh, in October 10th, 1643: "Ordaining, that presbyteries should proceed "with the censures of the kirk against all such as should refuse or "shift to swear and subscribe the league and covenant, as enemies to "the preservation and propagation of religion." Censure is here denounced against opposers of public covenanting in much stronger terms than those used by the associate presbytery. Mr. Willison might then have represented this commission of the general assembly as no less chargeable, than the associate presbytery, with the crime of making other terms of church communion, than those made by Christ, and of infringing the communion of saints.

§ 56. *Alex.* It is granted, on all hands, that public covenanting is an occasional duty: it is not to be observed at stated times; but only as the cases and circumstances, to which it has a special relation, occur. Many think it is not seasonable at present, because the church is not persecuted by the civil magistrate.

Ruf. The time of the church's distress is a proper time for public covenanting. But the church may be, and often is, in great distress from prevailing errors, offences and reproaches, when there is no persecution by the civil magistrate. There was no persecution on account of religion, by the civil governments in the reigns of Asa, Hezekiah, or Josiah, or in the time of Nehemiah; and yet these were most remarkable times of public covenanting. If the time of persecution were the only proper season of public covenanting, we might suppose, that there would have been an example of it in the long persecuting reign of Manasseh. But there is no mention of it in the account of his reign.

* Display of the Secession Testimony, vol. i. page 255.

The truth is, it is not so proper to use it as a mean against persecution, or against the danger of losing religious or civil liberty; as *it is* to use it against a remarkable prevalence of error and other corruptions, affecting the church as a spiritual society. It is more proper to use it in the latter case; because every instance of public covenanting recorded in scripture, was levelled against idolatry and other evils, in principle and practice, affecting the church as a spiritual society: and because it is an ordinance of religious worship; in the use of which we are to proceed on spiritual and evangelical principles. Whereas a *bond*, in which people should engage to defend their religious and civil liberty, ought to be a political or civil one; in which peaceable citizens of different religious sentiments should be admitted to join.

Alex. What reason have Seceders to hold, that public covenanting is seasonable at present?

Ruf. They reckon, that the errors and corruptions, now prevailing in the visible church, require this peculiar solemnity of the christian profession; because those, who have made a good profession of adhering to a faithful testimony against these errors and corruptions, are now under peculiar temptations to backsliding; and therefore, they are called to join in public covenanting, as a proper mean of promoting their steadfastness. Moses, exhorting the people of Israel to constancy in cleaving to the truths and ordinances of God, enjoined them to remember the day, on which they stood before the Lord in Horeb.* Public covenanting is seasonable, when many are going back from the holy profession they have made; as it is of the same nature with that solemn and explicit profession of faith in Jesus Christ, which he called the twelve apostles to make, when many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. *Then said Jesus to the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*†

Public covenanting is seasonable, when jealousies and misunderstandings prevail among professors; as it is an appointed means of removing them, and of promoting mutual confidence. Public covenanting is similar to the explanation, which the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh gave to the other tribes, on the occasion of their building an altar at Jordan.‡

It is to be used as a seasonable means for the conviction of the opposers of a necessary testimony, exhibited for the doctrine and order of the church of Christ. After we have dealt with these opposers, by reasoning, warning, reproving; we are also to use this farther mean of declaring our joint adherence to that testimony with the solemnity of an oath. So our Lord Jesus, having labored to reclaim the Jews from their unbelief, by his doctrine, his miracles, his example, closed his ministry with a sworn declaration, of his Divinity. *The high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. And Jesus said, I am.*‖

* Deut. iv. 9, 10. † John vi. 67, 68, 69. ‡ Josh. xxii. 21—29.

‖ Matth. xxvi. 63, 64—and Mark xiv. 61, 62.

Again, it is observed, that the present time is a proper season for public covenanting; because the obligation of the solemn covenant engagements of our forefathers is, in a great measure, forgotten; and such covenanting is a proper mean of reviving the sense of that obligation; for when we engage in public covenanting, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, we acknowledge, not only the primary obligation we are under to do so from the Divine law, but also, the secondary, from the covenanting of our fathers.

It may be added, that Seceders reckon the present time to be a proper season for public covenanting; because it is a time in which they must expect to suffer reproach for a faithful adherence to the principles of our covenanted reformation. This cause is every where treated with such contempt, as must be distressing to those who know it to be the cause of God and truth. They experience what the Psalmist felt, when he said, *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily to me, Where is thy God?** It is a time of distress, on account of God's judgements. We are under manifold spiritual judgements. The Lord is hiding his face and withdrawing from us. And awful temporal judgements are likely to follow. Our distress, therefore, may induce us, as the distress of the Jews, in Nehemiah's time, induced them to make a sure covenant. We should essay to turn to the Lord in the way of public covenanting, as good Josiah did, and caused the people of Judah to do, when he was under distressing apprehensions of the great wrath of God, about to be poured out upon them; because their fathers had not kept the word of the Lord.†

§ 57. *Alex.* Since the obligation of covenant engagements is disputed, might not covenanting be practised by a particular church, without any express reference to the covenant engagements which have been entered into by their fathers? The covenanting of the Israelites is constantly said to be the making of a covenant, or the entering into it: it is never once called the renewing of a former covenant.

Ruf. There are three things that necessarily belong to public covenanting, namely, the acknowledgment which the covenanters make of God's relation to them as their God, their confession of sin, and their engagement to duties. In each of these particulars, as they are found in the several instances of public covenanting, recorded in the history of Israel, after their covenanting at Horeb, we may observe a reference to former covenant engagements. *First*, the covenant they entered into was called the covenant of God, the God of their fathers, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 32; and they entered into covenant with the Lord, as the God of Israel, 2 Chron. xxix. 10; as having been long before known to be their God, and acknowledged as such, in the former covenant transactions of their fathers, in which they avouched the Lord to be their God, and themselves to be his people, Deut. xxvi. 17—2 Chron. xv. 12. *Secondly*, they confessed their sins, as breaches of their former covenant engagements. When Ezra directs the people to make a covenant with their God, he exhorts them *to make confession to him, as the Lord God of their fathers*, Ezra x. 11. We have rebelled, say they, referring to the allegiance formerly sworn to

* Psal. xlii. 10. † Nehem. ix. 38—2 Chron. xxxiv. 21, 31, 32.

God; *Why do we deal treacherously, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?* Dan. ix. 5—Mal. ii. 10. *Thirdly*, the duties they engaged to, were considered as incumbent on them, not only by the primary obligation of God's law, but also, by the secondary obligation of their former covenant engagements. So, in the account of the covenanting in Josiah's reign, it is said of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that *they did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers*;* that is according to the covenant into which their fathers entered: and what they did according to that covenant, was undoubtedly what they had engaged to do in their own act of covenanting. It is plain, therefore, that the repeated covenanting of the Jews, as it included these three particulars, was a real renewing of their former solemn covenant engagements: and hence we justly call *it so; as* our translators have not scrupled to do so in the contents of some chapters, Joshua xxiv. and 2 Chron. xxxiv. and on supposition, that a particular church is under the obligation of covenant engagements that have been formerly entered into, it is the indispensable duty of that church, to recognise in her public covenanting, her former covenant engagements: the Lord reproves her sin, and therefore, she ought to confess it, not only as a breach of his law, but also, as a breach of covenant: the Lord requires the practice of duty; and therefore, the church ought to promise and engage to practise it, not only as what his law requires, but as what his church and people have promised to him. Our public covenanting would not be agreeable to the word of God, if it did not include an engagement to make conscience of walking answerably to the obligation of our former profession of being the Lord's, and of our former engagements to serve him. Hence it cannot well be denied, that there is a real impiety in attempting to exclude from the public covenanting of a particular church, a reference to the obligation of the covenant engagements she has formerly come under.

Alex. Seceders, in their public covenanting, engage to bear witness against the errors and corruptions of others. But the matter of Israel's covenant, was only a reformation from their own sins, and the future practice of their own duty.

Ruf. It is true, that much of the associate presbytery's acknowledgment of sins is taken up with an enumeration of public sins, after the example of the acknowledgment of sins in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah. The very design of public covenanting is, that the covenanters may appear on the Lord's side, against all the public evils of those among whom they live. It is a way in which God has appointed such as desire to be found faithful in their generation, to make a stand against prevailing corruption, and to promote reformation among others, as well as among themselves. Public covenanting, without reference to public sins, and to public and general reformation, is therefore a contradiction in terms. The people of Israel, in their covenanting, appeared as witnesses for God, not only against corruptions among themselves, but also, against the idolatry of the nations around them. They appeared as a people, *redeemed from the nations, and their gods;* as a people, of whom the Lord said, *Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.*†

* 2 Chron. xxxiv. 32. † 2 Sam. vii. 23. Isai. xliii. 12.

The public covenanting of those, who are in a state of secession from some particular church or churches, on account of obstinacy in corruption, would be absurd and unscriptural, if it were without any acknowledgment of that corruption, or without any engagement to contend and testify against it. For it would be a criminal partiality indeed, in a people's confession of sins and engagement against them, as grounds of God's controversy with the present generation, to omit those corruptions which they have judged to be so great, as to warrant their separate communion. At the same time, it is certain, that people's engagement to forsake their own sins, and to practise their own duties, is essential to such covenanting as is according to the word of God. But no candid reader of the associate presbytery's acknowledgment of sins and engagement to duties, will charge them with any wilful omission on this head.

§ 58. *Alex.* I have only one thing more to offer, before we conclude this conversation; which is, that people are too apt to think, as Mr. Marshal, in his Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, observes, that they will bring themselves to good by vows and promises, as if the strength of their own law could do it, when the strength of God's law doth it not. Was there no ground to suspect that the associate presbytery, by insisting so much on public covenanting, might encourage people to entertain such a vain and delusive imagination.

Ruf. In the passage, which you have quoted from Mr. Marshal's excellent treatise, he warns us not to trust in the act of vowing, as if it had, in itself, any power of producing in us what is spiritually good; or any worth, on account of which we have ground to expect supplies of grace from God. But this caution is not more necessary in vowing to God, than in the use of other means; for we are not to rest on means, as if they, of themselves, could afford us any help or strength; but we are to rest only on God, who appointed us to use them; expecting the spiritual benefit from himself alone, as the God of all grace, for the sake of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The associate presbytery was remarkably careful to caution people against the abuse of vows in a self-righteous way. To this purpose, I shall read a passage concerning personal covenanting, out of a treatise written by one of the members of this presbytery. "If personal "covenanting," says he, "be set about, in the case of a troubled con- "science, as a mean of getting it pacified, under an apprehension of "peace and acceptance with God—yea, as a mean of obtaining a sav- "ing interest in Christ; let this be done in ever so evangelic like a "manner, it is but some sort of an attempt to repair the breach of the "covenant of works; a going about, however speciously, to establish "the person's own righteousness, a seeking righteousness, *as it were*, "by the works of the law. For still, the person will have some res- "pect to his own covenant, and to his felt attainment, as to proper "exercise in making it; as the immediate ground of that settlement, "which his soul is brought into, about his saving interest in God's co- "venant of grace. Then only is personal covenanting rightly man- "aged, when a person is thereby devoting himself to the Lord as his "God; with his conscience purged from guilt, and pacified by faith's "application of the blood of Christ; his soul being at rest in God, ac- "cording to the new covenant, about all his spiritual and everlasting

"concerns; and his heart under a sweet constraint of Christ's be-
"lieved love to him; with a fire of love and gratitude in his heart to
"Christ, taking effect in a gracious engagement for living unto him.
"Personal covenanting may, perhaps, be reduced to pourings out of
"the heart before God in prayer."*

What the associate presbytery have stated, concerning the connexion between God's covenant of grace and our covenant of duties, and concerning the influence which the one has on the other, is highly proper for guarding people against a legal manner of covenanting. Allow me to read some passages of it. "The covenant of grace," say they, "which is made with and stands fast in Christ our glorious
"Head, lays us under much further obligation to duty and service,
"than the covenant of works, even while it stood in the first Adam.
"And our obligation to vow and pay our vows, to covenant and per-
"form or keep our covenants of duty and service to God in Christ,
"is yet more strengthened and furthered, by our being under a fuller
"and clearer dispensation of the covenant of grace, than that which
"those who lived under the Old Testament had."

"The influence, which the covenant of grace has upon our cove-
"nants of duty, appears especially by considering the promise of
"the former. The promise of the covenant of grace, as it is set
"forth to us in the gospel, is a promise of all grace, habitual and
"actual; of grace for performing every duty required in the precept
"of the law; a promise of the Spirit, in the plentiful effusion thereof,
"to make us fruitful in holiness; a promise of strength to walk and
"run in the way of the Lord; a promise of recovery, in the case of
"failures and decays; and a promise of perseverance unto the end,
"in a course of gospel obedience. And as we cannot set about vow-
"ing or resolving to perform any duty commanded in the law, with-
"out the grace promised in the gospel; so this grace is to be appre-
"hended and depended on, as the great encouragement to vow and
"resolve upon obedience."

"The influence, which the covenant of grace has on our covenant
"of duty, is to be considered with respect to the authority enjoining
"obedience, and calling us to devote ourselves and our service to the
"Lord. Though this authority is originally the same that enjoined
"obedience upon man in the first covenant; yet it appears to us
"more amiable, by its being the authority of God in Christ, recon-
"ciling the world to himself. While God is related to us as our
"God and Redeemer, we are laid under the strongest obligations to
"duty and obedience, according to the import of the preface to the
"ten commandments."

"In fine, the influence, which the covenant of grace has on our
"covenant of duty, is to be considered with respect to the furniture
"we have in our new covenant Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hav-
"ing in him righteousness for acceptance, and strength for assistance
"in every duty, and particularly in vowing obedience to him;† the
"Spirit of grace being above measure in our glorious Head, for our
"use and behoof; we are called to be strong in the grace that is in
"Christ Jesus, for by him strengthening us, we can do all things.‡

* Mr. Gib's Sacred Contemplations, pages 91, 92. † Isai. xliv. 3, 4, 5.
‡ 2 Tim. ii. 1. Philip. iv. 13.

"This furniture we have always in him, as our new covenant Head; "and we have always access to the benefit of it, by faith; the language of which is, *Surely, in the Lord, have I righteousness and "strength.** And as, without this faith, it is impossible to please "God, by any doing or service; so, by this faith, we are in case to "please God, and serve him spiritually and acceptably. There is "no comparison between the furniture we once had, in the first "Adam, and this furniture we have in Christ; which is no less than "all the fulness of the Godhead, dwelling in him; so as we also are "complete in him; according to his promise, *My grace is sufficient "for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*† As, "therefore, we are called to work out our salvation with fear and "trembling; because it is God who worketh in us, both to will and "to do of his good pleasure; and as we are to sanctify ourselves, "because he is the Lord who sanctifies us.‡ So we may set about "the great work of covenanting to serve and obey him, with humble "confidence, in the faith of this new covenant furniture, which we "have in Jesus Christ; saying, *We will go in the strength of the "Lord God:—We will make mention of thy righteousness, even of "thine only.*"‖

DIALOGUE V.

The difference between the Seceders and those called the Reformed Body, on the head of the civil magistrate.....Arguments used by the associate presbytery, in support of their doctrine on this head.....Pleas of the Reformed Body for their opposite opinion..... The practice of the Reformed Body, in taking benefit of the present government and paying taxes to it, inconsistent with their professed opinion concerning that government.....The principles of Seceders greatly misrepresented in a late publication of that body.....The occasion of the controversy about the religious clause of some burgess oaths.....The decision of the synod concerning that clause.....The justice of that decision.....That decision, in the circumstances of the synod at that time, necessary..... Of the question, whether this decision should be a term of communion—and of the manner in which that question was carried in the affirmative.....The majority of the acting members of the synod, at the rupture, shewn to have been on the side of the decision.....Objections against the conduct of the defenders of the said decision, considered.....Thoughts on the censures passed on the opposers of the said decision.....The consequences of this controversy.

One day, as Alexander and Rufus were taking a walk near a flock of sheep, they observed two rams butting one another with apparent fierceness. See, said Alexander, the hostility between these animals, which are naturally mild and harmless. This occurrence puts me in mind of the animosities of christians; who, as they profess to be Christ's sheep, ought to be meek and lowly in heart, and in all

* Isai. xlv. 24. † John i. 16. 1 Corinth. xii. 9.

‡ Philip. ii. 12, 13. Levit. xx. 7, 8. ‖ Psal. lxxi. 16.

their deportment. How deplorable is it, that religion, which is designed to promote mutual love, should be an occasion of variance and contention! In this respect, the associate presbytery and their followers seem to be even more blameable than christians of other denominations. I can scarcely perceive a shade of difference between their profession and that of the people who, in this country, are called Covenanters; and yet, I am told, some of the opinions of these people were opposed by the associate presbytery.

Ruf. With regard to your general remark about the disputes among christians, I still think, as I observed before, that great injustice may be done to the parties in a religious controversy, by a slight and careless notice of them, as if both were alike blameable. This ought not to be admitted in any particular case, without accurate examination. Impartial inquiry will almost always discover more prejudice, more misrepresentation, more evasion, more abuse of words on one side, than on the other. The attempt to maintain and propagate tenets contrary to the word of God, and to the scriptural profession of his church, is undoubtedly the work of Satan, for seducing the people of God, and for causing divisions and offences. Hence, however much we ought to lament the religious disputes among christians, we ought still more to lament the obstinate attachment to error and corruption, which began, and which continues such disputes. The sowers of error, are the sowers of discord among brethren. Hence, it is an important duty of church members, and especially of ministers, to make a firm and undaunted opposition to the propagation of error. It is not uncommon, indeed, to hear what is spoken or written for the refutation of error represented as contemptible, and reproached as the turbulent effusion of anger; as nothing better, if not worse, than the most wretched sophistry, employed on the contrary side. Hence, in the present day, many seem to be persuaded, that in disputes concerning the doctrines of the christian religion, speaking the truth is as contrary to christian love and amity, as speaking falsehood. But the apostle Paul intimates the absurdity of such a supposition, when he asks the Galatians, *Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?* This interrogation implies a strong affirmation to this purpose: That no minister or other church member ought to be accounted malevolent or unfriendly to any, because he declares the truths of God's word, states the reasons by which they are established, and refutes contrary opinions. The associate presbytery endeavoured to do so, in the declaration they gave of their principles. The consequence was, that some were offended at one part of that declaration; and others at another part of it. But it may be justly asked, ought the members of that presbytery to have been accounted enemies to any, because they told them the truth? By no means.

§ 59. They who, you say, are called in this country Covenanters, have assumed the title of *the Reformed Presbyterian church.* They are considered as adhering to the way of the *Old Dissenters* in Scotland, who, after the revolution in the year 1688, disowned the British

government, and refused subjection to it, even in its lawful commands.* The principle on which this refusal proceeded was, that *a due measure* of scriptural qualifications is necessary to the *being* of a lawful magistrate. In a new statement of their principles,† we have this proposition: "That, in nations in which the light of the gos-"pel has been generally diffused, the infidelity of the rulers, though "set up and maintained as such by the will of the body politic to "which they belong, makes void their authority." It may be observed, that this proposition, though it is agreeable to the scheme of these people, does not express it adequately; for it is obvious, that infidelity, as it means a professed rejection of christianity, is only one of the many evils, which, according to their scheme, make void the authority of civil rulers.

Alex. How do the associate presbytery state their doctrine on this head.

Ruf. They grant, that we ought not to own the authority of mere usurpers or habitual tyrants, even in their lawful commands. Mere usurpers can have no lawful authority: but if any such acquire the consent of the people, whether expressed or tacit, as was the case of Cesar with the Jewish people; they then cease to be mere usurpers; and are invested with authority, to which God commands subjection and obedience in matters lawful. With regard to a habitual tyrant, or one who ceases to rule by just laws, and who is engaged in war against the lives, or in overthrowing the civil and religious liberties of the nation; as was the case in Scotland before the Revolution; it cannot be supposed, that such a person has any real consent of the nation to rule, or any lawful authority. However quietly one may be obliged to live under mere usurpers or habitual tyrants; yet there should be no acknowledgment of their authority, as binding upon the conscience. The party, with whom the associate presbytery dealt, did not charge the British government, nor do their followers in this country charge the government of the United States, with usurpation or habitual tyranny; and therefore, these cases do not belong to the matter in question.

It is farther to be observed, that the associate presbytery always suppose the person, whom they consider as a lawful magistrate, to be in the actual possession of those necessary and natural abilities which are common among men; and to have some competent measure of those moral and acquired qualifications which they ought to have; and to be performing those duties, which are incumbent on them, at least, in some useful and continued degree: all this being implied in the essential notion of magistrates, in the language of the scripture, and of every people. The principle of the associate presbytery concerning subjection and obedience to the civil magistrate, is consistent with the whole duty of his office, according to the word of God and the covenants, national and solemn league; with a testimony against whatever is defective or corrupt in the civil constitution or adminis-

* This is carefully to be attended to, as the precise point in dispute between the Seceders and those called Covenanters, what constitutes the *being* of a magistrate, to whom obedience or subjection in his lawful commands is due? The necessity of an eminent measure of scriptural qualifications to his *well-being*, is not disputed.

† Entitled, Reformation Principles, exhibited on the head of the civil magistrate.

tration; and with the lawful endeavours of the people, in their several capacities, to have magistrates reformed according to the word of God. It is also consistent with our refusing to obey the unlawful commands of rulers; and with any self-defence that is necessary, lawful and expedient, according to the word of God and right reason; such as our worthy ancestors attempted at Bothwell and Pentland. "There is no manner of inconsistency," says the presbytery, "between people's standing on their defence, against particular injuries "offered by a magistrate, and their acknowledging his authority in "lawful commands." Hampden refused to pay the tax called ship-money, while he owned Charles the first to be his lawful sovereign.

In short, the associate presbytery maintain, that as there is a precept in the law of God, authorising people to choose magistrates or rulers over them; so, wherever they are led, in the course of Providence, to invest a person with a right to rule over them, that person, while he continues to be countenanced by the majority of a nation, and while his administration is such as has now been described, is not only a providential, but also a preceptive magistrate; or one invested with the office of ruling, in that very way which the precept, or God, in the precept, enjoins. Hence, they rejected the opinion expressed in these words of the Testimony of the Reformed Presbytery, "That "a *due* measure of those qualifications which God requires in his "word, is essentially necessary to the constitution of lawful authority "over a christian people."* If by a due measure of scriptural qualifications, were meant such conformity to the precepts of scripture, as is attainable in the present state; it is granted, that in this sense, it is *the duty* of persons of every description, rulers and ruled, to endeavour to attain a due measure of such qualifications. And no deviation from this rule, with which any civil government or its officers are justly chargeable, is to be defended. But the reformed presbytery held, that a due measure of scriptural qualifications is so essential to *the being* of a magistrate among a christian people, that no one who wants that *due measure* is to be owned as a lawful magistrate, or to be submitted to in his lawful commands, for conscience sake. This is the tenet which the associate presbytery have opposed.

§ 60. *Alex.* How have they opposed it?

Ruf. They have shewn, that magistracy, being an ordinance of the law of nature, what is essential to its being, or what constitutes a lawful magistrate, is the same among heathens and christians. The moral law, so far as it is revealed by the light of nature, is the same law which is revealed more perfectly in the scripture; and therefore, whatever truly constitutes one a magistrate according to that law, as made known to heathens, must constitute him a magistrate according to the same law, as made known to christians.†

* Testimony of the Reformed Presbytery, page 192.

† Christianity, says Mr. Rutherford, does not *make* any one a king over christians: for then he would not be a king over christians, so long as he wanted christianity; which is false: for the primitive christians acknowledged the heathen emperors. The Jews were to obey Nebuchadnezzar and other heathen kings. Paul exhorts christians to be subject to every power, Rom. xiii. 1, 2—1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3. We abhor the popish dethroning of kings, when they turn heretics, and leave off being members of the christian church.
Due Right of Presbytery, page 393.

They have shewn, that if infidelity or the want of a due measure of scriptural qualifications be allowed to be sufficient to annul the relation between a magistrate and his people; then, it will be found sufficient to annul other relations founded in the law of nature, such as those between a husband and his wife, between a parent and his children, between a master and his servant. By this scheme, persons may be led to refuse to own their relations on this pretence, that they want a due measure of scriptural qualifications; and servants may decline to obey their froward masters; though the Spirit of God says, *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle; but also to the froward.**

They have shewn, that the opinion in question is contrary to the precepts of the holy scriptures. To this purpose they quote Prov. xxiv. 21, *My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change.* As the fear of the Lord, in the style of the scripture, signifies not only an inward disposition of mind, but all those external duties which we owe to him; so the fear of kings or magistrates must also denote all those external duties which we owe to them; such as owning their authority and paying taxes. What are the kings, whom God's people are thus commanded to fear? Certainly any whom the body of the nation acknowledge to be their rulers or magistrates, and while they are so acknowledged. For, with regard to the Jews, it cannot be denied, that the authority of their wicked kings, while the body of the nation were really consenting thereto, continued valid; so that particular subjects were bound in conscience to submit to their lawful commands. Their civil authority, having its rise in the consent of the people, according to the indispensable law of nature, was not subverted by the apostacy of the people from the true religion, or by the deficiency of the kings themselves with regard to scriptural qualifications. On the same principle, the Jewish people were bound to fear those whom other kingdoms acknowledged as kings, when sojourning in their dominions. He who is Mediator, though not as Mediator, but as God, says of himself; *By me kings reign, and princes decree justice, even all the judges of the earth.*† These words declare the legitimacy as well as the existence of the office and authority of kings and judges, not only in Israel, but in the nations of the world in general. Hence it appears, that the Jews were equally obliged, by this precept, viz. *Fear the Lord and the king*, when sojourning in other kingdoms, to fear whatever kings were acknowledged as such by these other kingdoms. Accordingly, long afterward, this precept was repeated, as applicable to their case, while they were scattered through the countries of such kings.‡

In short, this text plainly teaches, that the Lord's people ought to fear all kings, who are acknowledged as such by the several kingdoms to which they belong; as there is no exception made here, or in any other place of scripture. All the duty of persons under the worst of these kings or rulers is sufficiently comprehended in this command. For it binds persons to acknowledge the rulers in any lawful exercise of their authority, while it is acknowledged by their people; and, at the same time, in the fear of the Lord, to testify and

* 1 Pet. ii. 18. † Prov. viii. 15, 16.. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 17.

contend against their corruptions, and to endeavour the reformation of the government. So that by the subjection here commanded, persons can never be involved in the public corruptions.

Another precept, which the associate presbytery consider as contrary to the opinion in question, is, Ecclesiastes x. 4, *If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place, for yielding pacifieth great offences.* Here we are plainly taught, that upon the supposition that a ruler is so corrupt as, without any just cause, to discountenance, discourage or distress the subject, upon personal or religious accounts, the subject must not repay evil for evil; but, while he is bound to use lawful endeavours for self-preservation, for vindicating his innocency and the cause for which he suffers, and for having government reformed; he must, at the same time, continue in subjection and obedience to the ruler in lawful matters, as long as the civil state continues to acknowledge him. The direction here given to the subject, not *to leave his place*, but *to yield*, must signify his continuing in the business and duty of the subject; for such is the yielding which is a proper mean for convincing the ruler of his error, and for extinguishing his offence.

The third precept which the presbytery produce in opposition to the opinion of those whom you call Covenanters, is our Lord's answer to the insidious question of the spies sent to him by the pharisees—Luke xx. 25, *Render therefore unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and unto God the things which are God's.* The people, concerning whose subjection to a certain ruler the question was proposed, were not Gentiles, or such as had never been reformed; but the Jews, a people in covenant with God, whom the Lord had chosen to be a peculiar people to himself. Their ruler, at this time, was Cesar, a heathen, acknowledged by them as their king.* The question, *Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Cesar, or not*, was intended to insnare our Saviour, by inducing him to give such an answer as would either expose him to the penalty of the Roman law, by disowning Cesar's title; or to the resentment of the Jewish people, by owning his title in such a manner as would be contrary to the liberty and privileges which they still claimed. But they were disappointed in their expectations: for, in his answer, he acknowledged Cesar's title; and by adding, at the same time, the command of rendering unto God the the things which are God's, he declared the regard due to God in his Being and institutions. Thus, they could not take hold of his words before the people: they could not find him chargeable with teaching what was contrary to any law, civil or ecclesiastic. They marvelled at his answer. It was an admirable display of Divine wisdom. Some have supposed, that in this answer, our Lord shifts the question, and leaves Cesar's title undetermined. Our Lord might indeed have lawfully refused to answer their captious question, had he seen meet; but, to impute a shifting or equivocal answer to him, is to reproach and blaspheme him.† For Cesar either had, or had not, a just title.

* John xix. 15.

† It has been said, that our Saviour declined answering a question respecting sin and duty, on other occasions; as in the case of his own authority, Mark xi. 27—33; in the case of the woman taken in adultery, John viii. 4—12; and in that of the division of an inheritance, Luke xii. 13.

If he had not a just title; then, an evasive answer would have at least dissembled and palliated sin, instead of tending to reclaim from it: if he had, such an answer would have dissembled and dishonored truth, instead of declaring and recommending it. Besides, while the answer plainly bears the form of a command, it must be most dishonoring to the Lord Christ, to ascribe to him an ambiguous and shifting command, a command which binds to nothing. Indeed, if we allow ambiguity in one of the clauses of this command, we must allow it in both: for it asserts both God's right, and Cesar's in the same terms: and how absurd is it to represent our Saviour, as declining in this answer to assert the prerogatives of his Father! The word *therefore*, requires the command to be understood as an inference from what had been immediately before confessed, that the money, which they allowed to be current among them, bore Cesar's image and superscription. The native inference from this fact is, that Cesar was actually, and by the tacit consent of the Jews, their chief ruler; and therefore, that they owed him tribute.

A fourth precept to the same purpose is, that which the apostle Paul delivers in the first seven verses of the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. It is essential to all the books of scripture, that every part of them was necessary, with respect to the duty and interest of men, at the very time when they were first written, as well as in after ages. It would be a reflexion on the wisdom of God to say, that he had ever made a revelation which was of no use at the time when it was made. But of what use could this command concerning subjection to the higher powers, be to the Romans, if it was not to be applied to themselves with reference to the

But it may be observed, with regard to the woman taken in adultery, and the division of an inheritance between a man and his brother, that our Lord declined determining these cases, as what properly belonged to the civil magistrate:—Whereas, the question concerning the lawfulness of giving tribute to Cesar, was an important case of conscience, which it belonged to his office, as the great Prophet and Teacher of his church, to determine. As to the question concerning his own authority, his appeal to John the Baptist's testimony concerning his person and office, was a sufficient determination of it, though he did not give the formal answer to these designing men, but left it to be inferred from their own consciences. But as to the question, whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cesar, to say that our Lord's answer, connected, as it was, with the acknowledgment of those who proposed the question, did not determine it in the affirmative, is to say, at least, that his words, on this occasion, do not give that instruction, which every circumstance of the text concurs in suggesting, that he did give. It has been said, that Christ's commanding tribute to be paid to Cesar, unless he commanded it to be paid as a tessara or token of loyalty, no more proves the morality of Cesar's right, than his allowing a person to give a part of his property to a robber, whose superior physical power was manifest, in order to save the person's life, or the remainder of his property. But there was certainly a difference between Cesar's claim, and that of the robber; as the former was made under the consideration of a lawful debt, due to a legitimate ruler:—Whereas, the latter is supposed to be made on no other ground than that of superior physical power. When there are two evils, to one of which a person must submit, if both be physical, he is to choose the least; but no moral evil is ever to be chosen or submitted to. The act, however, of paying tribute to any civil government, by a person who considers it as an unlawful government, is a moral evil. For when a civil government demands tribute under the notion of a just right, the payment of it, being in its nature a voluntary act, is an acknowledgment of that right; and consequently, of the legitimacy of the government: while it is only the legitimacy of a government that makes it lawful to pay tribute to it. A person, therefore, who regards the party requiring tribute as an immoral government, can no more warrantably pay tribute to such a government, than a person, according to the apostle, could warrantably eat what was set before him, after it was told him that it was a sacrifice to idols, 1 Corinth. x. 28.

rulers then in being? Surely, it would have been needless for the apostle to deliver a rule, with pathetic expostulations concerning the necessity and importance of it, to persons who had no interest in it; no opportunity or warrant to put it in practice. Nay, on supposition that it was sinful to own the civil rulers who were then acknowledged by the Romans, or to obey them in their lawful commands for conscience sake, the apostle's manner of writing in this passage, tended to insnare the christians to whom he wrote. For, while he presses them to be subject to the higher powers, he no where gives them the least hint that they ought not to apply his words to their own case, with regard to the magistrates then exercising their office in Rome. The truth is, they could not avoid making such an application of this passage. The apostle puts it beyond all doubt, that, by the *higher* powers, he means *persons* in power. For when he gives the reason why the christians, to whom he wrote, were to be subject to these higher powers, he calls them *rulers* and *God's ministers;* and, speaking individually of the power, he calls him *the minister of God; He that beareth not the sword in vain; a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.* Thus, it is plain, that he speaks of persons in office: and it is as plain, that he speaks immediately of the rulers who were *then* exercising their office. For he calls them *powers that are* presently existing; powers that are ordained. And all along, he speaks of *the power* and *the powers* in the present time, as persons then actually in office. And he inculcates subjection to the rulers, in its several parts, as the duty of those very christians *then in* Rome, and as a present duty: while he says unto them, *Pay ye tribute; render tribute, custom, fear, honour.* Thus, it is certain, that the Spirit of God here enjoins civil subjection, in all its parts, upon the christians in Rome, towards the rulers then in the Roman empire. Though the advantage of those civil rulers who are privileged with the full discovery, made in revealed religion of the law of nature, be very great; yet, it is an important truth, that there is no other duty incumbent on the civil magistrate, precisely as such, than what can be argued for from the law of nature, without having recourse to any principles peculiar to revealed religion. Here, the apostle treats of the duty of the magistrates, precisely as such, without touching on any thing, good or bad, respecting their private character or qualifications: because he intended to shew, that the christians at Rome, in their subjection to the civil magistrates there, were to view them no otherwise than precisely *as magistrates*, possessing and exercising civil power, according to the characters here given of magistrates, as ministers of God, for good to those over whom they are placed, and as not a terror to good works, but to the evil. We cannot suppose, that there ever were or could be any such magistrates or persons in civil power by the will of their people, as had not these characters in some considerable degree, and were not instrumental, under God, in preserving some external order and equity in the world; and in restraining mankind from devouring one another, like the fishes of the sea. No considerate persons, who are acquainted with the history of the Roman government, will say of the magistrates through the empire in the apostle's time, that they did not at all bear these characters,

nor answer these ends.* On the whole, what is clearly stated in this passage, as the rule of duty to the christians at Rome, must, according to the general nature and design of the holy scripture, be obligatory as a rule of duty on all christians in the world; binding them to be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake, to all magistrates presently acknowledged by the nation to which they belong; and also, to contend and testify, according to their knowledge and opportunity, against all the evils, public and private, with which any of these magistrates are chargeable.

A fifth precept, which the associate presbytery produce against the opinion in question, is expressed in the words of the apostle; *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.*† It is evident, that the duty, which the apostle charges Timothy to inculcate upon the christians in Crete, is that of obedience and subjection to the lawful commands of such magistrates only, as were then in the Roman empire, to which the Cretians belonged. This passage agrees, in the particular now mentioned, with that which was last quoted from the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans; and also, in its being applicable to all men, with reference to whatever magistrates are over them by the consent of the civil state to which they belong.

The last precept which the associate presbytery propose on this question, is in these words of the apostle Peter: *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Fear God. Honour the king.*‡ That the apostle here speaks of persons, who were then in power, and who might then be submitted to, cannot be denied without an express contradiction of his words. A distinction of persons in power or magistrates, which is understood in the former precepts, is here expressed, namely, a distinction of them into supreme and subordinate. Christians are enjoined to yield submission to *every ordinance of man;* that is, to every person in civil office by the will of the society. And that they might have no pretence for declining that submission, on account of the unworthiness or wickedness of any of these persons, he teaches, that they should be submitted to in their lawful commands, *for the Lord's sake.* It was necessary, that they should reverence God's institution in the office of these persons, and his sovereign will in choosing to make any use of them for maintaining public order in the world. What the apostle in this passage said to the christians in his time, is here recorded

* Hence we may understand, that the monstrous wickedness of Nero, is no relevant objection against the submission here enjoined to the Roman government. For we are to distinguish between the personal character of Nero, in respect of which he was to be detested, and his public character, as invested with authority by the laws of the empire, and as administering the government according to these laws. In the former character, he was justly condemned as an enemy of mankind, by the senate of Rome: in the latter, he was to be respected and obeyed in his lawful commands.

† Tit. iii. 1. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15, 17.

as a rule, to which the practice of christians was to be actually conformed in all succeeding generations.

Thus, the associate presbytery shewed, that their doctrine concerning the duty of owning the civil magistrate, and of obeying him in his lawful command, as taught by the precepts of the holy scriptures.

They also shewed, that their doctrine on this subject, was confirmed by the examples of God's people, which are imitable in all succeeding ages.*

It was their constant practice, as it is represented in the sacred history of the Old Testament, to live in subjection and obedience to the authority of such magistrates as were acknowledged by the civil society of which they were members. This practice of the *pious* in the kingdom of Judah, did not arise from any extraordinary obligation they were under to the family of David; for they behaved in

* In order to evade the warrant, we have to submit to the civil government, under which we live, in its lawful commands, arising from such examples, it is not pretended, either that the governments under which these saints accepted civil offices were legitimate, or that their acceptance of them was sinful: but some other suppositions are made; such as, that an office may be held, and the duties belonging to it may be done, without any acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the civil government under which it is held. But, as has been just now shewn, if a government has no lawful authority, the nominal officers, who are subordinate parts of it, cannot have any; and in that case, their pretending to perform official duties is sinful.

Another supposition that has been made with respect to Daniel and his three friends, who held offices in Babylon, is, That the immorality of the Babylonish government was indefinite; that they had no fixed constitution; that the monarch's will was the law of the realm; that we are not certain whether there was any thing essential to this government but mere physical force; that on the contrary, almost every thing in the American constitutions is specific; that Daniel, on account of the nature of the Babylonish government, as now represented, had not to swear to support an immoral constitution. To this supposition, it may be answered, that we cannot impute to Daniel a thing so contrary to the law of God, as it would have been for him to consent to be a part of so irrational a government as that which is here described; a government having no constitution, no rule, but the unknown will of one man, or physical force. But this representation is not applicable to the Babylonians, who were as proud of their intellectual attainments as of their physical strength. Hence, the Lord says to Babylon; *Thy wisdom and thy knowledge have perverted thee. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels*, Isai. xlvi 10, 13. The reputation of the Babylonians for science, their judges and counsellors lead us to conclude, that they had written laws, or laws as much known and regarded as if they had been written. There are rules in every state, which, whether written or not, have a sort of establishment by custom and general approbation, and which the most despotic princes are afraid to violate. In Babylon, particularly, it is said, there were three separate tribunals appointed to administer justice; the first of which took cognisance of adultery and similar offences; the second of thefts; and the third of all other crimes. Such tribunals suppose that there was a civil constitution and laws in Babylon. The fact that the Babylonians drove their king from among them when he was in a state of insanity, shews that they knew their rights by some other rule than the will of their prince.* Nor is it improbable, that Daniel and his three friends took an oath of allegiance; since Nebuchadnezzar, upon delivering the government of Judah to Zedekiah, made him swear such an oath. Nor does it seem improbable, that it was one of the laws of the Babylonian empire, that an oath of allegiance should be required of such as were admitted to offices of trust. When a government is said to be despotic or arbitrary, it does not necessarily mean that there are no laws at all, where it obtains; but that the rulers unjustly exalt their will or pleasure above the laws. After all, this exception does not affect the design, for which we produce these examples; which is, to shew that the people of God have always distinguished between the *being* and the *well-being* of a lawful civil government; and acknowledged the former, even when there was not more, but much less of the latter, than in the case of our present civil government; just as other civil relations, agreeable to the law of nature, subsist, notwithstanding the vices of those related.

* Daniel iv. 33.

the same manner in the kingdom of Israel. Nor was it on account of a due measure of scriptural qualifications possessed by the rulers; for they yielded subjection and obedience in lawful matters to the worst of the kings who were over them by the will of the civil society to which they belonged. Nor was their practice in this matter any other under the wicked kings in Israel and Judah where great reformation had been attained, than it was under the heathen princes in Egypt and Babylon.

The example of christians in owning civil rulers and obeying them in their lawful commands is the same, as it was under the Old Testament. We see the apostle Paul, conformably to his own doctrine, acknowledging the authority of the Roman magistrates supreme and subordinate. He cheerfully answered for himself before Felix as a judge to the Jewish nation,* before Festus and king Agrippa;† and he actually appealed to Cesar, declaring that he *ought* to be judged at Cesar's judgement-seat.‡ It is true, he says, when the Jews spake against him, *he was constrained to appeal to Cesar.*‖ But the constraint he was under, in this case, was what the nature of an appeal implies, a moral constraint, which not only allows, but requires the action to be voluntary. It is evident, that in this appeal he acknowledged Cesar's office and authority. The apostle Paul's exhortation to christians in his time, to pray and give thanks for all that are in authority, implies that there was then no dispute about the legitimacy of those magistrates, who were acknowledged to be such by the civil society to which they belonged. The same thing is implied in the condemnation of some wicked persons for despising dominion and speaking evil of dignities, or of their civil rulers.

§ 61. *Alex.* The reformed presbytery, I understand, complained much of the associate presbytery as chargeable in this matter with confounding the preceptive and the providential will of God. A person may be a civil magistrate, said the reformed presbytery, by the consent of the majority of a nation, who is so only by the providential will of God, and not according to his preceptive will.

Ruf. This distinction seems to be of no use in the question between them and the associate presbytery; as that presbytery never said, that a rightful magistrate is or can be constituted by any event in the course of Providence, without regard, or in contrariety, to the precept. The only point in dispute between the two presbyteries was, what it is that constitutes a preceptive magistrate.

Alex. The reformed presbytery give several examples of providential rulers, that were not preceptive. Thus Saul was providentially continued on the throne of Israel, after the Lord had ejected him from being king: David, from the time at which Samuel anointed him, was the rightful king: and not only David, but many among the tribes of Israel rejected the government of Saul.

Ruf. The Lord's rejection of Saul, intimated to him by Samuel, respected the succession to the throne in his family, not his actual continuance in the office of a king during his own life. This rejection was intimated at two different times; the first is recorded in 1 Sam. xiii. 13, 14. the second in chap. xv. 26—28. It does not appear that any person, beside Samuel and Saul, was privy to these interviews.

* Acts xxiv. 10. † Acts xxv. 8. xxvi. 2. ‡ Acts xxv. 10, 11. ‖ Acts xxviii. 19.

After the first of these intimations, Samuel, in the name of the Lord, commanded him to go and smite Amalek.* After the second, Samuel's returning to honour Saul before the elders and people of Israel, implied an acknowledgment of him as king. And afterwards a like acknowledgment is implied in David's accepting a commission in the army, and going wherever the king sends him against his enemies.† And David, even when he fled from the violent attempts of Saul against his life, still owned him to be the Lord's anointed. The anointing of David by Samuel was only his designation to be Saul's successor in the kingdom. But he neither was nor could be actually a king, till he was chosen and constituted such by his being anointed, first over Judah, and seven years afterward, over Israel. Thus it appears that Saul, from the time of his election to the royal office till his death, was preceptively, the only actual king in Israel. Many of the several tribes of Israel helped David and espoused his cause in opposition to Saul's unjust persecution of him. But it does not follow, that they owned, as yet, any other lawful king of Israel than Saul.

Alex. Another example which the reformed presbytery produced to shew, that a person's being in authority, by the consent of the people, is not sufficient to constitute him a lawful ruler, is that of Absalom. For, say they, David was ejected out of the hearts and territories of Israel; and Absalom was in authority by the consent of the people: and yet Absalom was not the rightful sovereign of Israel, but David. In order to prove that David was ejected out of the hearts of the majority of Israel, they quote these words, That *Absalom passed over Jordan and all the men of Israel with him.*‡

Ruf. David was not ejected out of the territories of Israel on occasion of this rebellion: he was accompanied with an armed force from Judah to Mahanaim, a city, which was situated in the confines of the half-tribe of Manasseh where it bordered on the tribe of Gad, and which had been the seat of government, when Ishbosheth reigned over Israel. Nor is it proved, that David was wholly ejected by the expression you have mentioned. There was, no doubt, a considerable number of the Israelites who joined with Absalom in his conspiracy, but that they were all Israel, or the majority, cannot be proved from the term *all*, more than it can be proved from the same term, that *all* Israel were with David when he passed over the brook Kidron. *All the country*, or the whole land, as the words of the original signify, *wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over.*‖ Both places are to be understood of the *all* that were with David and with Absalom respectively. In the case of David, it is not disputed; and that it must be so taken in Absalom's case is evident from the use of this term in the account of the counsels which Hushai gave to Absalom, to gather all Israel generally to him. Upon hearing this counsel, Absalom and *all the men of Israel said*, It is better than Ahithophel's.§ It is plain, that, since all the men of Israel generally were absent, being yet to be gathered to Absalom, when the expression *all Israel* is used with regard to those who approved Hushai's counsel, it can mean no more than those who were already with Absalom. Nor is it necessary

* 1 Samuel xv. 1, 2. † 1 Sam. xviii. 13, 25, 26, 27. ‡ 2 Sam. xvii. 24.

‖ 2 Sam. xv. 23. § 2 Sam. xvii. 11, 14.

to understand it otherwise in the 24th verse. There is no evidence that Absalom was regularly chosen by the people of Israel, or even by any one of the tribes, to be their king. Even in the height of the conspiracy, the description which Hushai gave of the rightful sovereign was applicable, not to Absalom, but to David, namely, he *whom the Lord and this people and all the men of Israel*, that is, the majority of them, *choose*.* The possession of the kingdom, according to Ahithophel's counsel, which is called *good*, as being well adapted to the success of Absalom's enterprize, was to be determined, not by the choice of the people, but by the sword.

Alex. I shall mention only another of their examples, which is that of Libnah, a city of the priests, revolting from Jehoram; because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers.† This, they say, is an approved example of a refusal of subjection to persons in power, on accounts purely religious.

Ruf. The last clause of the verse, you referred to, is, in the original, connected with the two preceding clauses in the same manner. So that the motive of Edom's revolt from Jehoram and that of Libnah appear to have been the same. But we cannot suppose, that the Edomites, a heathen people, inveterate enemies of God's Israel, acted from religious motives. The true import of this verse is, as Mr. Pool observes, that Jehoram's forsaking the Lord was the reason why the Lord raised him up so many enemies, both from abroad and at home.

The associate presbytery deny that the case of simple revolts belongs to the question under consideration. A simple revolt lies in breaking off immediately from the civil body; and consequently from the head or ruler of that body, without ever denying his authority over the members who still belong to the said body. It would be very ridiculous to argue, that because persons may justly refuse to own the authority of a civil state over them, when they no more belong to it, they may, therefore, refuse to do so, while they still belong to it.

Alex. These people hold the magistrate whom they are willing to own as a lawful magistrate to be one who exercises a compulsory and punitive power about matters of religion. They insist that he should execute the penalties annexed in the books of Moses to the violation of the first table of the law, as well as those annexed to the violation of the second: such as that in Deut. xiii. 5, 6. *That prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death; because he hath spoken lies to turn you away from the Lord your God, who hath brought you out of the land of Egypt. If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, who is as thy own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, come, let us go serve other gods; thou shalt not consent, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him.*

Ruf. It is, no doubt, the duty of every people to use means to have their civil constitution and administration more and more agreeable to the word of God and subservient to the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is granted, that we have much reason to lament the deficiency of our civil rulers in these respects. But in the preceding arguments it has been shewn, that there may be various degrees of such deficiency, which do not annul the relation between the magistrate

* 2 Sam. xvi. 18. † 2 Chron. xxi. 10.

and the people, or the right of the former to the subjection and obedience of the latter in lawful commands. It is therefore unnecessary to insist farther on this point. But it may be useful to observe, that many are led into error with regard to the duty of the civil magistrate, by supposing, that the laws delivered by Moses concerning what was to be done in the Jewish state are to be adopted indiscriminately as the municipal law of every other state. It is granted, that many of these laws are binding on every nation, as they are manifestly precepts of the law of nature, agreeing with what we find among the laws of the Greeks and Romans, and other heathen nations, so far as they were civilized and followed the law of nature. They must be binding on all, when they are necessarily implied in the precepts of the decalogue, and repeated in the New Testament. But it is obvious, that several of these laws were designed to be binding on the Jews only, constituting what is usually termed *the Judicial Law;* such as, the laws concerning the cities of refuge; concerning the right of the first born to a double portion; concerning the jubilee; concerning a man's marrying the widow of his brother, who had died without children; against sowing a mixture of seeds; and against wearing a linsey-woolsey garment. With regard to the punishment of some crimes, the law, considered as enjoining punishment was moral; and yet considered as determining the degree of punishment it was judicial.* A precept must be considered as only judicial, if the observation of it be inconsistent with any command given in the New Testament. But the charge given to the Israelite in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, not to spare his nearest relation, not even the wife of his bosom, if such a relation should attempt to entice him to idolatry, is manifestly inconsistent with the command, which the apostle gives to christians, not to leave or put away their husbands or wives on account of their infidelity or idolatry.† Though we cannot suppose that infidel or idolatrous husbands or wives would fail to use every means in their power to entice their beloved partners to join with them in their infidelity and idolatry; yet the apostle directs christians in such a case, instead of prosecuting such idolatrous relations to death, to live with them in peace.

The precepts of the judicial law, were designed for the purpose of maintaining the practice of the ceremonial law: but when the ceremonial law itself is abrogated by the coming of Christ, these precepts, which were intended to support it, are no longer binding. The church was always a spiritual society, maintained by the word and spirit of God. Even under the Old Testament, the Lord said concerning the maintenance of his church; *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit.*‡ There was then, however, an appearance of carnal power in the Divine appointment of the Jewish state, with its judicial laws and armies, to be a peculiar guard to the church. But now under the New Testament, when that guard is removed, the spirituality of the means by which the church is maintained, is set in a clearer light; *For*, says the apostle, *though we walk in the flesh, we do not*

* In legibus de pœnis scelerum juris naturalis est pœnæ substantia; sed modus et gradus pœnæ juris est particularis, atque adeo mutabilis. Turretini Institut. Theol. Elenct. Loc. xi. Quæst. 27.

† 1 Corinth. vii. 12, 13, 14. ‡ Zechar. iv. 6.

war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

It is not a certain rule, that a law or command is moral, when the reason given for it, is moral: for there are general principles on which both positive and moral laws are established. Thus, the command to observe the ceremonial distinction between clean and unclean beasts, is grounded on this moral reason, That as God is holy, so his people ought to be holy, Lev. xi. 44. But whatever is used to enforce any command, it still belongs to the judicial law, while it has the maintenance of their distinct national state, the wall of partition between them and the Gentiles, for its peculiar and immediate end. And it is the more reasonable to allow that their kings should be appointed to do some things, such as the capital punishment of idolators, not simply as kings, but as Jewish kings, because, as such, their office and administration were typical of the Lord Christ, the King whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion.

Alex. These people say, that they cannot fully incorporate with the national society; because they consider it as in a state of national rebellion against God. The federal constitution, say they, does not even recognise his existence as the King of nations. Most, if not all of the state constitutions contain positive immorality: for they recognise such rights of conscience as sanction every blasphemy, which a depraved heart may believe to be true. The officers of government are sworn to support these constitutions. Deists and even Atheists may be chief magistrates. The major part of the states recognise the principle of slavery.*

Ruf. Some have supposed, that though men are bound by the law of nature to form civil societies and to establish rulers; yet individuals or any minority, though living within the boundaries or territory of such a society or nation, may, for reasons which they think sufficient, refuse to incorporate with it in its civil or national capacity. But this supposition is contrary to the obligation men are under by the law of nature to defend one another in the enjoyment of their natural rights, and to use the means that are necessary for their defence. Submission to civil government, being one of these means, and a necessary assistance which men owe to one another, they cannot decline communion with others in that submission, without a flagrant transgression of the law of nature.† This sin is greatly aggravated in the

* See the Two Sons of Oil, by Mr. Wylie, page 48, &c.

† If it should be asked, how we can oppose separation from civil communion in the state, while we justify secession from sacramental communion in the church: we answer, that in some respects, the cases are not parallel:

1. Those who consider themselves as separated from the communion of the state, do so upon this ground that the magistrates of the state are not lawful magistrates at all. But we hold it to be consistent with our secession from a corrupt or backsliding church, to own her to be still a true church of Christ, and her ministers to be lawfully called ministers of Christ. We adhere to our secession as an appointed means of her reformation and as a preservative against backsliding in our own case.

2. People may be justly in a state of secession from a particular church on account of corruptions, while they continue to reside in the same territory. But it is here shewn that a minority cannot lawfully remain in the same territory, while they disown the authority of the civil magistrate chosen and supported by the body of the inhabitants there.

3. The spiritual ends of church communion may be sometimes much more promoted by secession from a corrupt church, than by continuing in conjunction with it. But with regard to a body of people residing in the same territory, the separation of any consider-

case of those who actually enjoy their natural rights under the protection of a civil government, and consequently owe it allegiance in point of justice and gratitude. It is true, that a civil society may lay such an obstruction in the way of an individual, as may warrant his declining their civil communion. This would be the case, if they were to make his consent to the violation of any command of God, or his engagement to refrain from giving a faithful testimony against any violation of his command, a necessary condition of that communion. In that case, the person excluded would be an outlaw, or rather would be under the necessity of removing without the limits of their jurisdiction. In such a case it is necessary to follow our Lord's direction, *When ye are persecuted in one city, flee to another.* But none are precluded from civil communion by such obstructions either in Great Britain or in the United States. It is true, that, in the former, there are such conditions annexed to a seat in Parliament and other places of trust, as Seceders cannot comply with, consistently with their profession and testimony. But they consider, that the government or the majority in every civil society must have the power of granting and withholding such special favours, at their pleasure; and that, though the manner in which that power is exercised may often be far from being commendable, they have no warrant, on that account, to disown a government, by which they are protected in their natural rights, their liberty and property. Seceders as well as others enjoy the privileges of citizens more fully in the United States. The constitutions of these states include no ecclesiastical supremacy, make no incroachment on the liberty and independence of the church of Christ, and secure to citizens a greater share of civil and religious liberty, than any other political constitutions in the known world.

But the principal reason why we cannot warrantably disown the federal constitution and the constitutions of the several states is, that they contain what is requisite, according to the law of nature, to *the being* of a legitimate government; namely, that, according to these constitutions, our magistrates are to be chosen by the people; and that the end of their office is to preserve public order, and to protect men in the enjoyment of their natural rights. That the law of nature is the standard of a legitimate civil government is admitted by a writer who professes to oppose the doctrine of the associate presbytery on this head.* "As magistracy," says he, "flows from GOD CREATOR, "the common parent and head of all, the law of nature, common to "all men, must be the immediate rule of its administration. A re-"lation common to all should be regulated by a rule common to all. "All stand in the same relation to God, considered as Creator and "Moral Governor. The standard for regulating this relation must, of "course, be common. This standard is the law of nature, which all "men necessarily possess." It is true, he adds, that "Revelation is "introduced as a rule, by the requisitions of the law of nature, which "binds men to receive with gratitude whatever God is pleased to re-

able part from the civil communion of the rest, would be inconsistent with the support of civil society. The Lord sometimes commands his people to withdraw from corrupt churches; but not to refuse civil communion in lawful things with the men of the world; for that would be to go out of the world.

* Mr. Wylie in the Two Sons of Oil, page 10.

"real." But surely he cannot mean, that the law of nature binds or even allows us to consider revelation as necessary to determine what constitutes *the being* of a civil magistrate; to determine what the law of nature itself had sufficiently determined before. The sentiments contained in this passage and the necessary consequences of them, were they candidly adhered to, might go a great way to remove the difference between two bodies of Presbyterians, both professed friends of a covenanted reformation.

It is, indeed, to be lamented, that in the constitution of the United States, no religious test whatever is required as a qualification of persons admitted to offices of trust, not even such an acknowledgment of the being of God and of a future state as is required of public officers in the constitutions of the particular states. But this neglect of a due acknowledgment of God does no more to annul the civil relation constituted by this instrument between our magistrates and their people, than such a neglect can do to annul the relations of husband and wife, of master and servant. Nor is it improper to observe with regard to this and other defects of the federal constitution, that agreeable to the nature of republican principles, it makes provision for its own amendment; and therefore one who engages to support this constitution is not to be considered as consenting, that its errors should be retained, but as declaring his desire, that all just and regular means may be used for having them corrected.

The expression in the constitution of Pennsylvania, "that all men "have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God ac-"cording to the dictates of their own conscience," signifies two things: First, that a judgement of discretion belongs to every person in matters of religion: and secondly, that the civil magistrate cannot justly compel persons by his civil penalties to embrace any profession of religion, or to join in the communion of any church. Hence it is added in the said constitution, "That no man can, of right, be com-"pelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or to main-"tain any ministry against his consent." It is evident, therefore, that *the right*, contemplated in this passage of that constitution, is not a right in relation to God, but in relation to the civil magistrate. It does not mean, that men have a right before God to worship him in any way which an erring conscience may suggest, however contrary to his word; but that, for doing so, they are not amenable to the judgement of the civil magistrate. Nor is it hereby meant, that the introduction of men's inventions into Divine worship is less sinful or pernicious, than the crime of robbing a person of his property; but that the cognisance of the former is not, like that of the latter, within the sphere of the magistrate's office: just as the neglect of giving alms to the poor, or the neglect of seasonable advice may, in some cases, be very criminal; and yet no person is amenable to the civil magistrate for such neglect. The law of nature, as the writer formerly referred to justly observes, is the standard for regulating the office of the civil magistrate and his administrations. From this principle it follows, that it does not belong to the civil magistrate to take cognisance of any other evils, than such as are contrary to the law of nature. It is the province of the civil magistrate to teach the community what the law of nature requires and forbids; while the public preaching of the

peculiar doctrines of Divine revelation; the judicial assertion of them, and the judicial censure of the contrary errors belong to the office of gospel ministers only.

Alex. According to the author whom you quoted a little while ago, the civil magistrate has a right to judge of the decrees of ecclesiastical assemblies; and, when they are agreeable to the law of God, it is his duty to sanction them and to adopt them civilly as good and wholesome laws, tending to promote the happiness of the realm. Before the magistrate give his sanction to any church-deed, he must bring it, says this author, to the sacred touch-stone: if it agree therewith, he ought to ratify it; if not, he has not only a right to reject it, but he is bound to stamp his negative upon it. He ought also, according to this author, to exercise a compulsory and punitive power about things religious; a power which extends to all persons within his jurisdiction.

Ruf. It is not denied, that a person who is a civil magistrate, as well as others, ought to judge for himself, whether the determinations of church courts be agreeable to the word of God or not, and may openly declare his private judgement. But the judgement by which he gives his sanction to these determinations when they are agreeable to the law of God, (that is, when they are so according to his judgement;) by which he puts his negative upon them, when they are not so; and which is attended with the exercise of compulsory and punitive power, must be an authoritative judgement. To allow this authoritative judgement to the civil magistrate as such, who, simply under this consideration, is not a member, and far less an officer, of the church of Christ, would be inconsistent with her liberty and independence, and even with her relation to Christ alone as her head. All right to an authoritative judgement concerning the affairs of the church of Christ is derived from him as Mediator. But the civil magistrate as such derives nothing from Christ as Mediator, his office being wholly from God as the God of nature. Were such an authoritative judgement of the civil magistrate admitted, and supposed to be only equal to that of church courts, it must be sufficient, in the case of his opposition, to counteract the determinations of these courts, and to render them of no effect. But the truth is, it must be superior; while the civil magistrate is allowed the exercise of his compulsory and punitive power in matters of religion. This is materially that Erastian scheme which wrests the government of the church out of the hands of those officers whom Christ has appointed in his church, and puts it into the hands of the civil magistrate. This scheme tends to overthrow the sole headship of Christ over his church; as it supposes her courts to be under the controul of men, who cannot be pretended to have any official authority from Christ as Mediator and head of his church. Besides, it is a scheme inconsistent with the natural rights of men; as it allows the civil magistrate, civilly by his authoritative judgement about things religious, to adopt the decrees of ecclesiastical assemblies as good and wholesome laws of the state, to be enforced by the exercise of his compulsory and punitive power. But how can we suppose it to be always or almost ever the case, that there will be none that are to be accounted good and peaceable citizens who ought to be protected by the civil magistrate in the enjoyment of their natural rights, but such as are

willing to submit to the determination of church courts? In fine, the scripture is so particular in declaring that *the weapons of our warfare*, or the means of promoting religion under the New Testament dispensation, are not carnal; and in directing christians, who are scattered among so many nations, to live peaceably with all men, and to do them good in temporal things, however little success there may be in attempts to bring them to the knowledge of evangelical truth,* that we have much reason to disapprove schemes which recommend the use of compulsory and violent measures for turning men from their errors in religion. The direction in Luke xiv. 23, *Compel them to come in*, has sometimes been cited in favour of such measures for that end. But it is remarkable, that according to the true import of that parable, this charge is given to gospel ministers. They are the only public servants whom Christ employs in bringing sinners into his house; and the only weapons with which he furnishes them for compelling sinners to come in, are the doctrines, the promises, the invitations, the warnings, and other persuasive arguments to be found in his own word. In this view, the text now mentioned is very much against any consideration of the sword of the civil magistrate as a proper mean of reclaiming men from errors in religion. For if Christ had meant that the sword should be used for that end, he would rather have given this command to the civil magistrate, armed, as he is, with the sword, than to gospel ministers, altogether destitute of worldly power.

Thus, Alexander, I would plead for toleration: not, however, for that positive toleration, by which positive countenance and encouragement are given to the erroneous; but for that negative toleration, which consists in not molesting people, or not depriving them of their natural rights; of their lives, their liberty or property, on account of errors in their religious profession; while there is nothing in that profession, or in their practice, inconsistent with the external character of good and peaceable members of civil society.

Alex. Inattention to the difference between the office of the civil magistrate and that of the gospel minister, in respect of their origin, the objects about which they ought to be exercised, and their immediate ends, appears to have been a principal cause of error on this head. Some have supposed both to be derived from Christ as Mediator. This opinion is undoubtedly erroneous. For, though the civil magistracy as well as other things are given to Christ as Mediator, to be made subservient to the good of his church; yet, its being is not like that of the gospel ministry, from him as Mediator; nor is the object about which it ought to be exercised, like the object of the gospel ministry, the right administration of the ordinances which Christ as Mediator hath instituted; nor is the immediate and proper end of it, like that of the gospel ministry, the salvation of souls, or the advancement of men's spiritual and eternal interests.

Ruf. The native consequences of the erroneous tenet you have mentioned are such as these: That magistracy does not flow from God considered only as the Creator and moral Governor of the world; that the institution of magistracy does not belong to the law of nature; that civil magistrates, with their emoluments, their penalties and

* Rom. xii. 18. Gal. v. 10.

grandeur, belong to the mediatorial kingdom of Christ; and that either there are no magistrates among the heathens, or the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, in respect of one part of it, namely, magistracy, is visible among them. But the truth is, Christ's mediatorial kingdom is not of this world. Magistracy, as well as other things belonging to the kingdom of Providence, are put into Christ's hand, to be ordered in subserviency to the good of his church. But this ordering does not alter the nature of these things, or the tendency of them to their natural ends. They are still, in themselves, mere worldly things. Magistracy, for example, is the same secular institution among christians, as among heathens. And the mediatorial kingdom of Christ is visible among the former, and not at all among the latter.

Alex. I have heard, that these people charged the associate presbytery with declining from the cause for which some zealous Presbyterians suffered persecution, in the reign of Charles the second. Hume, in his history, represents them as fanatics and enthusiasts; though he allows, that they were treated with unjustifiable severity. They were certainly pious people. Did their opinion concerning the civil magistrate, agree with that of those now called the Reformed Body?

Ruf. That these martyrs should be represented in an odious or contemptible light, by such a writer as David Hume, is not to be wondered at. For, to use the words of an excellent poet,

> A patriot's blood
> May, for a time, insure to his lov'd land,
> The sweets of liberty and equal laws;
> But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize,
> And win it with more pain. Their blood is shed
> In confirmation of the noblest claim,
> Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
> To walk with God, to be divinely free,
> To soar, and to anticipate the skies.
> Yet few remember them. They liv'd unknown,
> Till persecution dragg'd them into fame,
> And chas'd them up to heaven. Their ashes flew
> No marble tells us whither. With their names
> No bard embalms and sanctifies his song;
> And history, so warm on meaner themes,
> Is cold on this.*

The martyrs under Charles the second, though they disowned the ecclesiastical supremacy, or the headship over the national church, with which he had been invested by the parliament in 1661 and 62, yet acknowledged his civil authority, and obeyed him in things lawful, till about the year 1679. Ten of these martyrs, who suffered in 1666, delivered a joint testimony; in which they say, "We are condemned by men, and esteemed by many as rebels against the king, whose authority we acknowledge." Another testimony, by some of the former ten, has these words: "We declare in the presence of God, before whom we are now ready to appear, that we did not intend to rebel against the king and his just authority; whom we acknowledge for our lawful sovereign."† All, that are acquainted with the history of the persecution in that period, know, that when

* Cowper's Task. † Naphtali, page 216, 221.

the sufferers were asked, Whether they owned the king's authority, the interrogators meant to include the authority which was given him by the act of parliament in spiritual matters; and that if the sufferers had answered in the affirmative, they would have been considered as consenting to the spiritual authority which he claimed. Even in the latter part of this period of persecution, it is evident, that the principal reason of their answering that question in the negative, was, that they understood the king's authority, which they were then required to acknowledge, as including his ecclesiastical supremacy. "The "main cause of my suffering," said Mr. Cargil, who was put to death in 1681, "is my not acknowledging the present authority, as it is "established in the supremacy and explanatory act. The magistracy, "which I have rejected, is that which was invested with Christ's "power." When he mentioned the explanatory act, he said, "he "meant, that the act, which, in explaining the king's supremacy, gives "him a right to the authority of Jesus Christ, is against right."* In the year 1684, John Campbell, being asked by a lieutenant colonel Windram, Whether he would pray for the king? answered, that "he both did and would pray for the king, that the Lord would give "him a godly life here, and glory hereafter." The colonel said, That is not enough: you must pray for Charles the second, as he is supreme over all causes, ecclesiastic, as well as civil. John replied, "that, in his opinion, that was praying for him as the head of the "church, a title, which belonged to Christ alone."† So that it appears, that the sufferers would have acknowledged his civil authority, and would have continued to obey him in things lawful, notwithstanding his supremacy; if he had not required their owning that supremacy and obedience in unlawful things; or if he had not acted the tyrant, exercising all sorts of cruelty upon them, merely because they refused to make acknowledgments, which it was unlawful for them to make.

Alex. Those who are now termed Covenanters, deem it inconsistent with the obligation of the solemn league and covenant, to own any other as lawful magistrates, than such as have a due measure of scriptural qualifications.

Ruf. The greater the measure which any magistrate possesses of of these qualifications, he is, no doubt, the better. But if, by a due measure of them, be meant all that the scriptures, as the rule of duty, requires, whoever expects to see a magistrate possessed of such a measure of these qualifications,

Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.

But with regard to the solemn league, it contains an engagement to preserve and defend the civil magistrate, in defence of the true religion and liberties; that is, an engagement to own and obey him, so far as is consistent with the preservation of the true religion and civil liberty. But this is quite different from an engagement to acknowledge no other as a lawful magistrate, to whom obedience in lawful things is due, than such as profess the true religion sworn to in the league:—This appears, both from the doctrine and the example

* Crookshanks' History, part 2d. chap. 5. † Ibid. chap. 9.

of those who first entered into it. What their doctrine on this subject was, we learn from the confession of faith, which, in pursuance of the design of the solemn league, was composed by the Westminster assembly, and adopted by the general assembly of the church of Scotland, in 1647. For, according to that confession, "Infidelity or "difference in religion, does not make void the magistrate's just and "legal authority; nor free the people from their due obedience to "him." Nor is the magistrate here excepted, who has been set up by the will of the body politic, where the light of the gospel has been generally diffused.

How agreeable this doctrine concerning the civil magistrate, is to the engagement in the solemn league, appears from a passage which I shall now read, of the Apologetical Relation, the author of which* had a most accurate acquaintance with this subject. "The Covenanters "do not say, that they are never bound to defend the king's authority, "but when he is actually promoting and advancing the work of God, "according to his full power and place; nor do they say, that when "he opposeth the work of God, that they are at liberty to destroy his "person, or to spoil and rob him of his just power and authority. "And therefore, both that clause in the covenant, and their proceed-"ing may be abundantly justified, without clashing with the confes-"sions of the Protestant Reformed churches, or of their own; for they "still acknowledge, that difference in religion does not make void the "magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from sub-"jection."

The same thing is evident, from the example of those who first entered into the solemn league and covenant. For they acknowledged Charles the first as their lawful king, and professed their willingness to obey him in all his lawful commands: though he still declared, that he reckoned himself bound in conscience to defend prelacy, and even his ecclesiastical supremacy.

The sufferers under Charles the second disowned, as has been already observed, his ecclesiastical supremacy or headship over the church; but we have no reason to think, that they would ever have disowned his civil authorty, if he had not tyrannically required their acknowledgment of subjection to that supremacy, and also their renunciation of the solemn league, which they had sworn to the Most High God, torturing and putting them to death, when they refused obedience to such unlawful commands.

Alex. One thing, in which it seems hard to justify these people, is their holding it lawful to pay taxes to our government, and to take the benefit of its courts of justice, while they account it an unlawful government. An excuse for the payment of tribute to such a government, is implied in these words of their testimony published in Scotland: "They testify against a direct and active, a free and voluntary "paying of tribute," unto the present government, "as unto the ordi-"nance of God, particularly, when these dues are required as *a tessera* "of loyalty to such."†

Ruf. I cannot see any solid ground for the distinction in the words you have cited: for, if paying tribute to the present government be lawful, then it is plain, that it should be done directly and volun-

* Mr. Brown of Wamphray. † Testimony of the Reformed Presbytery.

tarily. On the other hand, if it be sinful, in the case as circumstanced, it ought not to be done at all; not even in an indirect and involuntary manner.

Alex. They sometimes quote Rom. xiii. 5, *Ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake:* as if those who hold the present government to be unlawful, and therefore will not pay taxes thereto from a principle of conscience, may yet, without sin, part with their money or goods for that purpose, *for wrath*, or from the fear of punishment.

Ruf. The plain meaning of this text is, that we ought to be subject to the civil magistrate; not only, as the worst of men often are, from the fear of punishment, but also, as christians ought to be, from a principle of conscience. The apostle is so far from allowing christians to be subject to the civil magistrate for wrath, without being so for conscience sake, that he enjoins what is directly contrary, that they should be no farther subject to him for wrath, than they are so for conscience sake: for the subjection here meant, is the subjection inculcated in the preceding verses; subjection to the civil magistrate as the ordinance of God, as the minister of God for good; that is a subjection to him for conscience sake; no other subjection being approved by the apostle.

It is improper to represent the payment of a tax as being only the circumstance of parting with money; while a tax is demanded as a just debt due to a lawful government for the protection it affords us; just as a debt is demanded by the proprietor of a house or land, from a tenant who has occupied it for some time. It must be as unjust to pay a tax to one who ought not to be acknowledged as a lawful magistrate, as it would be to pay the rent due for a house or land to one who we certainly know is not, truly, but only pretends to be, the proprietor thereof. But the countenance given in the former case, to an usurpation of the magistrate's office, is more criminal, as being more extensively pernicious, than the countenance which is given in the latter, to the unjust claim made to a house or piece of land.

Alex. In applying the text before-mentioned to this subject, they often say, We pay taxes to an unscriptural government on the same principle on which we may give a robber a part of our property to save the remainder. It is a pity that they cannot find a more decent simile than this; for it seems, at first view, shocking to common sense to represent a government, which it cannot be denied, answers the end, in a great measure, of good government in securing the administration of justice, and in protecting the citizens in the enjoyment of their natural rights, as no more entitled to any compensation than a band of robbers.

Ruf. A robber's demand of a person's money is not to be complied with, unless the compliance be a lawful mean of avoiding a greater evil; and then it is to be consented to for conscience sake. That it is a lawful mean, appears from this consideration, that the robber's demand requires no unlawful acknowledgment; such as the acknowledgment of the robber's moral right to the money he demands; for he makes no pretension to any such right; but only to a superior physical power of taking violent possession. But the demand of a part of our property upon a moral ground, namely, as a tax to which

a lawful magistrate only is entitled, is a very different case. A person's giving his money to the robber, is an acknowledgment of the superior physical power, on the ground of which it was demanded; but the giving of the money, demanded as a tax due to a lawful magistrate, is an acknowledgment of the moral right, upon the ground of which it is demanded. If he who demands the tribute be no lawful magistrate, but an usurper or unlawful ruler; then, it is sinful to comply with the demand, while he makes it upon the ground of a pretended moral right. We are to give no money to support an unlawful ruler. As we are not to give it for conscience sake; so we are not to give it for wrath, or from the fear of punishment; for we should rather suffer than sin.

Alex. They say farther, We may do all things commanded by the constituted authorities, which are in themselves right and lawful, not connected with unlawful circumstances, not because they are commanded by legitimate authority, which is the true tessera of loyalty; but either because the moral law requires them, or because they may be compelled to do them by physical force.

Ruf. There are several things in the practice of these people which cannot well be denied to be connected with circumstances which are inconsistent with their opinion concerning the unlawfulness of the present civil government. The payment of taxes, for example, is connected with the circumstance of their being required by the authority of the government. The ground of this demand cannot be physical force; because the physical force of government depends on the taxes that support it; and therefore, government's demand of taxes, cannot depend on its physical force. The whole reason of this demand, is the moral right which a lawful government has to be supported. Hence, the payment of taxes necessarily implies an acknowledgment of that right. To this purpose, the apostle says, *For this cause pay ye taxes* to magistrates; *for they are* public *ministers of God.** Hence it is evident, that when taxes are paid for the cause or reason for which the apostle directs us to pay them, (and whenever christians pay them, it should be for this reason,) they must be a true tessera or token of loyalty. In bringing a law-suit against any, a person acknowledges that the court, before which he brings the suit, has a just authority to determine it. If the authority of the court be unlawful, all its judicial proceedings are unlawful. To submit a cause to be tried and decided by such a court, is to sin against God; and also, to tempt the judge and jury to sin against him. Even a person's taking an oath before any of our civil courts, is connected with circumstances which imply subjection to its authority, and consequently an acknowledgment of it; such as the taking of the oath by the command of the court, in answer to a summons, bearing the stamp of the civil authority, and specifying time and place, and the cause depending. The buying and selling of houses and lands are connected with an acknowledgment of the civil authority, which grants the titles by which property in them is held, and by which it is transferred. An unlawful government cannot give a lawful title to property. Even the receiving of the money of any government, as lawful money, implies an acknowledgment of the

* Rom. xiii. 6.

legitimacy of the government that issues it. An unlawful government cannot make a lawful national currency. Hence, our Lord called for a denarius or Roman penny, in order to determine the question about Cesar's title to tribute.

It may be observed, that the passage you just now recited, seems exceptionable, as it implies, that there are right things which persons are to do, from the fear of being compelled to do them by physical force, while they are not bound to do them, because they are required by the moral law. But certainly we must allow the moral law, the law of God, to be a perfect rule; and therefore, it is evident, that there is nothing right, nothing that ought to be done, which that law does not require. The moral law, no doubt, requires things to be done in some circumstances, which it does not require to be done in other circumstances. But in every case, as it is circumstanced, the moral law determines what is duty, and requires it: and whatever is duty ought to be done, because the law requires it. Farther, it may be observed, that according to this distinction, there is one class of right things which persons are to do, because they may be compelled to do them by physical force; and another class of such things which are to be done, because the moral law requires them. But, in truth, that which is always to determine what ought to be done, is the moral law, the only rule of duty, and not motives or external occasions suggesting motives. It is certainly the doctrine of the holy scriptures, that we should not make the impulse of any passion, of hope or fear, of love or hatred, the standard by which we are to determine any act to be sin or duty. The revealed will of God, and nothing else, is that standard. These two questions, What things ought to be done, and what should move us to do them, are always formally distinct, and require different answers.

§ 63. *Alex.* Have not this body lately published a new statement of their profession, entitled, *Reformation Principles Exhibited?*

Ruf. Yes. I suppose, however, they will not disapprove a reference to the former testimony as a declaration of their genuine tenets. With regard to the new work, of which you speak, it may not be improper to observe, that the Seceders have reason to complain of the first part of it, as misrepresenting some of their principles. This will appear by reading a short paper, which I have written, containing a contrast, in some particulars, between the statement which the Seceders themselves give of their principles, and that which is given in this publication.

Statement given by Seceders.	*Statement given in Reformation Principles Exhibited.*
1. Mere usurpers can have no lawful authority: and if they shall acquire the consent of the people, whether expressed or tacit, they then cease to be such, and are invested with authority, whereunto God commands subjection and obedience in matters lawful. Again, in order to render one an habitual tyrant, it is at least necessary that he leave ruling by	1. The Seceders condemned all distinction between such rulers as happened, in Divine Providence, to have the power of a nation upon unlawful principles, and such as ruled by Divine ap-

Statement given by Seceders.

just laws, that he be engaged in war against the lives, or invading and overturning the avowed liberties and privileges of the nation; as was the case in the persecuting times before the Revolution. It cannot be supposed, that such a person has any real consent of the nation to rule; and therefore he can have no lawful authority. However quietly one may be obliged to live under usurpers or habitual tyrants; yet there should be no acknowledgment of their authority as binding upon the conscience. The presbytery's principle of subjection and obedience doth only respect things lawful, and is not at all inconsistent with any self-defence that is necessary, lawful and expedient, according to the word of God and right reason; such as our worthy ancestors endeavoured at Pentland and Bothwell. Yea, there is no manner of inconsistency between being in a posture of self-defence against particular injuries by a magistrate, and an owning, at the same time, his title and authority in what lawful commands he may impose.

Display of the Secession Testimony, Vol 1, page 290.

The associate presbytery and those who adhere to them, do not hold magistracy, or its lawfulness, to be founded on the providential, but on the preceptive will of God. They have nothing to say in defence of that magistracy which is merely providential; though not a little they have to advance, in proof that the office of every magistrate, whom a people have chosen, and whom they acknowledge to be invested with civil authority over them, is founded on the preceptive will of God, and is agreeable to his law, in its rise and origin.

Review of the Antigovernment Scheme, pages 34, and 35.

2. As it was once a peculiar duty of the Jewish nation; so it is peculiarly incumbent upon every civil state, whereinto christianity is introduced, to study

Statement given in Reformation Principles Exhibited.

probation: the only question which they would permit a christian to ask is, in relation to the matter of fact, Is there any person actually in power?

The Scotch Seceders exceeded the University of Oxford itself in maintaining the doctrine of passive obedience. They deny, that there is any difference as to lawfulness between one government and another.

Reform. Princ. Exhib. Part 1st, page 113.

2. The Seceders maintain that nations, as such, are not bound to acknowledge Christ or his religion; and

Statement given by Seceders.

and bring to pass, that civil government among them, in all the appurtenances of its constitution and administration, run in an agreeableness to the word of God, and to the interests of the true religion and reformation of the church; as otherwise they cannot truly prosper in their civil concerns, nor be enriched by the blessings of the gospel.

The whole people, adjoining themselves to the true church, should approve themselves to be true members thereof; and, considered in their conjunct and public capacity, (as thus only the matter is competent unto them) should, by their deed of civil constitution, provide, that their magistrates be obliged to concur in the same true religion and reformation, and to rule them by laws nowise prejudicial, but serviceable thereto.

Display of the Secession Testimony, Vol. 1st, page 280.

Statement given in Reformation Principles Exhibited.

that magistrates have nothing to do with christianity.

Ibid.

3. What the apostle ascribes unto magistrates, (viz. their being ministers of God for good, being not a terror to good works, but to evil,) is, in some measure, competent to all such in every nation or state. But the advantage lies very far on the side of such as have occasion to exercise their office for promoting the church's public good; while, at the same time, they are privileged with, (and endeavour to discharge their other special business, as well as this, according to) the full discovery which God's word hath made of those natural principles that comprehend the due exercise of their office, as well as its institution and end. The christian magistrate ought to determine himself, not merely by natural, but also by revealed or christian principles.

Display of the Seceess. Test. Vol. 1, pages 312, 313.

3. Seceders maintain, that Divine Revelation is not the rule by which men are to act in their civil constitutions and laws.

Reform. Princip. Exhib. pages 114, 115.

4. That our Lord's Mediatory government and administration doth extend to all outward things in the world of nature and providence, in so far as these things are supernaturally ordered unto supernatural ends, in the spiritual advantage of his church and people, or so far as

4. The Seceders maintain, that Jesus Christ does not, as Mediator, govern the world.

Reform. Princ. page 115.

Statement given by Seceders.

ordered in the channel of love and favour to them, with a subserviency to the purposes and glory of free grace in their salvation; and that all such orderings of outward things are the proper fruit of Christ's purchase; and that all these outward things, as considered in the formality or channel of these gracious orderings, do hold of Christ and his kingdom, as Mediator;—all this is heartily agreed to.

Display of the Secess. Test. Vol. 2, page 299.

5. The charge, brought against the synod's act upon the head of universal redemption, of denying, that believers themselves receive their common favours as benefits of Christ's purchase, is a gross calumny. For the said article is so far from excluding common favours which believers receive, that it doth not exclude their common trials and crosses from being among the benefits of Christ's purchase to them. Only these things are so, not as they stand in their earthly condition, but as they are sanctified through the new covenant, and so intromitted with by faith. The common benefits of life, in respect of the peculiar conveyance of them to believers, through Christ as Mediator, in the channel of new covenant promises, with a new covenant blessing upon them, are not received by their fingers, but by their faith.

Appendix to the Act of the Associate Synod concerning Arminian errors upon the head of Universal Redemption. Pages 34, 35.

6. Seceders believe that the world stands on purpose, that the covenant of grace may be exhibited and carried into execution; though they do not say, that it stands for this purpose *only*: because the standing of the world is also necessary in order to the execution of the covenant of works; for which, as well as for the execution of the covenant of grace, the truth of God is engaged.

Review of the Antigovernment Scheme. Pages 14, 15.

Statement given in Reformation Principles Exhibited.

5. The Seceders maintain, that the Redeemer has not purchased temporal benefits for the saints.

Reform. Prin. Exhib. page 115.

6. The Seceders maintain, that the world stands, not on purpose to exhibit the system of grace; but in order to bring into being the children of Adam, that they might be punished by the curse of the covenant of works.

Reform. Princ. Exhib. page 115.

When we endeavour to correct the errors of any, we should beware of imputing opinions to them which they do not hold. In this, as in many other controversies, the opposite parties often misunderstand one another. It should be the concern of both parties to discern the snare that keeps them asunder, while both are professing adherence, in other respects, to the same testimony for a covenanted reformation. On this subject, I shall only add one remark: Under the New Testament dispensation, the Lord's people are dispersed through the world as pilgrims and strangers, under a great variety of magistrates; and being always a minority, have little or no share in the choice of these magistrates. On this account, it might have been expected, that if the Holy Spirit had foreseen that most of these magistrates would be unlawful, or such as could not be submitted to or obeyed in their lawful commands, without sin, he would have given his people very particular warning of this danger. On the contrary, there is a deep silence through the whole scripture, as to this matter. We are, indeed, forbidden to walk after the commandment of rulers in any thing unlawful, or in the imposition of human devices in religious worship. But there are no warnings in scripture against submitting to and obeying the lawful commands of the magistrates of any country, who have been chosen and are acknowledged as such by the people there.

§ 64. *Alex.* Another subject, on which I wished to have some conversation at this time, is the controversy among the Seceders, about a religious clause in some burgess oaths. Though we, in America, are not concerned in these oaths, yet the dispute concerning this matter is interesting, as it must necessarily occupy a conspicuous place in the history of the christian church.

Ruf. The importance of a controversy is to be estimated not only by the occasion which may often seem trivial, but by the manner in which it is conducted, by its bearing on other subjects, and by its consequences. It is certain, that a great deal of truth, both doctrinal and historical, was either denied or maintained by the parties in this dispute. Instances of Divine mercy in upholding any in a steadfast adherence to their witnessing profession, ought to be recorded.

The contested words of the clause in some burgess oaths, are these: "Here I protest before God, and your lordships, that I profess and "allow with my heart the true religion, presently professed within "this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof:—I shall abide "thereat, and defend the same to my life's end, and renounce the "Roman religion called Papistry."

Alex. Many think, that the Seceding ministers should not have meddled with this oath, and that it was a thing they had no business with.

Ruf. In the year 1744, the associate presbytery, being considerably increased, agreed to divide themselves into three presbyteries, which were to compose the associate synod. That synod, having met in March 1745, it was proposed, that as the members had agreed to set about public covenanting in their several congregations, so they should endeavour to remove any public bars that might be found to their proceeding in that work. It was then found, that the case of some of their people, who had sworn a burgess oath, having the said

clause in it, might be such a bar. The synod's considering this case, and coming to a just decision of it, could no more be reckoned unnecessary, than the duty of guarding themselves and their people against being involved in the guilt of swearing contradictory oaths, and consequently, of swearing falsely. They could have no business which was, in their circumstances, at that time, more proper or more necessary.

§ 65. After much reasoning on the subject, they came to the decision, which I shall now read. "The synod find, that the swearing "of the religious clause of some burgess oaths," which was formerly recited, "by any under their inspection, as the said clause comes "necessarily in this period to be used and applied, does not agree to "the present state and circumstances of the testimony for religion "and reformation, which this synod, with those under their inspec-"tion, are maintaining; particularly, that it does not agree to, nor "consist with, an entering into the bond for renewing our solemn "covenants: and that, therefore, those of the secession cannot fur-"ther, with a safe conscience, and without sin, swear any burgess "oath with the said religious clause; while matters, with reference "to the profession and settlement of religion, continue in such cir-"cumstances as at present. Moreover, the synod find, that burgesses "of the secession, who are already concerned in such oaths, should "be required, in order to their admission into the bond for renewing "our solemn covenants, to attend conference with their respective "sessions, for signifying satisfaction with the present judgement of "the synod; and a sense of the mistake they have hitherto, through "inadvertency, been under, concerning such burgess oaths."

This cannot be said to have been a rash decision. It was the result of much grave deliberation. Before it was made, says a writer, who had the best opportunity of knowing the facts belonging to this affair, there was much reasoning on the subject of it, at four different meetings of synod, in thirteen sederunts, mostly very long. The synod was thrice engaged in public fasting, with regard to this matter; and thrice in private diets for prayer; and seven times were different brethren so employed in the course of reasoning.*

§ 66. The ground of this decision seems plain. For, supposing that it were people's duty to maintain a testimony for reformation principles, in the way of *secession* from the established church of Scotland; it is evident, that they who had espoused that testimony, and sincerely intended to continue in their adherence to it, could not swear an oath, having the said religious clause in it, without being guilty of swearing falsely. For in any country, where there is a certain church communion established by law, a person who describes himself as one *who professes and allows with his heart the true religion presently professed within that realm, and authorised by the laws therof*, must, according to the most natural meaning of the words, be understood as owning himself to be of that communion. A stranger to the dispute about the meaning of these words, would undoubtedly be surprised to hear that they had ever been taken in any other sense.

Alex. The burghers, I understand, say, that it was the true, the divine religion itself, professed and authorised in Scotland; the true

* Introduction to the proceedings of the Associate Synod in the year 1747.

religion professed by Seceders in their Act and Testimony, and not the faulty manner of professing and settling it, that was sworn to in the said clause of some burgess oaths.* In this sense, they considered that clause as binding them to the profession of the true religion, but not to formal and full communion with the established church.

Ruf. This interpretation is not to be admitted: First, because it takes the expression, *true religion*, in this clause abstractly, without a due regard to the following words by which it is defined. Secondly, because, according to this interpretation, the swearer of the said religious clause, while the words of it defining the true religion here intended, necessarily signify that he allows in his heart the present national profession of religion, and the authorising of it by the laws of the land; yet, being a Seceder, disapproves that profession and that authorising as faulty. The swearer's approbation of the national profession, and of the laws authorising it, is the native import of the words used in this clause: but the disapprobation of what the swearer judges faulty, is added in his mind; and, being neither expressed nor necessarily understood by the words, is an instance of that mental reservation, which sound morality does not allow to have any place in the taking of an oath.

It is to be observed, that the swearer of this clause acknowledges two things; first, that there is a profession of the true religion to which this definition agrees, *That it is made in this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof;* a profession which cannot be denied to be made in the communion of the established church: and secondly, that he himself professes and allows with his heart the true religion, according to the same definition. His profession, therefore, of the true religion must be allowed to be the same with that which is made in the communion of the established church; for the definition of both is the same. This clause, then, cannot reasonably be supposed to mean two sorts of religious profession; as if one sort were signified by the words, *I profess;* and a different sort by the words, *professed within this realm.*

The due profession of the christian religion always implies, that the professor is a member of the church of Christ; and that the profession he makes is that of some part of the visible church. Hence, there is no lawful engagement to the profession of the christian religion, which is not an engagement to the profession which is made of it in some particular church communion. But it is evident, that the church communion, to whose public profession the swearer of this clause vows adherence, is determined by the words, *presently professed and authorised by the laws of the land*, to be that of the established church; there being no other church communion, to whose profession this description entirely agrees.

It is a received maxim, that every oath ought to be taken in the sense of the administrator, and in pursuance of his declared design. Hence, we are led to conclude, that as the administrator himself of these burgess oaths professes the true religion in the way of formal and full communion with the established church; so, he considers the swearers of them as professing the true religion in the same way.

* Re-exhibition of the Testimony, pages 260, 261.

The word *presently*, as it is used in this clause, shews, that it means the swearer's approbation of the public profession of the established church at the time when it is sworn. Hence, the swearing of this clause must be directly opposite to the testimony of Seceders, which declares the present profession of that church to be so corrupt as to render the maintenance of a testimony in a separate communion necessary.

No person acquainted with the profession of religion made by the established church, and also with that exhibited in the testimony of Seceders, can, with any colour of reason, deny, that many things are admitted as consistent with the former, and included in it, which are directly opposite to the latter; such as the civil magistrate's power of dissolving the highest judicatories of the church, and of directing ministers to be settled according to the law of patronage; the condemning of various important truths contained in the Marrow of Modern Divinity; neglecting to acknowledge the covenanted reformation, as attained in the period between 1638 and 1649; censuring ministers for testifying against public corruptions; and especially, the persisting in and justifying these and the like evils in such a manner as rendered the maintenance of a testimony against them, in a separate communion, necessary.

On the whole, there is no reason to doubt, that the judgement expressed in the synod's decision concerning the religious clause in some burgess oaths, will at length be acknowledged, by serious and candid enquirers, to be just and moderate; namely, "That the "swearing of this clause, by any under their inspection, as the said "clause comes necesarily in this period to be used and applied, does "not agree to the present state and circumstances of the testimony "for religion and reformation, which this synod, with those under their "inspection, are maintaining; particularly, that it does not agree to, "nor consist with an entering into the bond for renewing our solemn "covenants."

§ 67. *Alex.* Might not the contending parties have exercised forbearance towards one another about this matter? I have heard, that the defenders of the clause as lawful, for the sake of peace, offered to condescend to an act discharging Seceders to swear this clause of the oath, as inexpedient in the present circumstances of strife and contention; and that this pacific proposal was entirely rejected by the antiburghers.*

Ruf. A respectable member of the associate synod, than whom no one had better opportunities of knowing all that passed in that court, declares in a publication a few years before his death, that the antiburghers could never reject the proposal you have related, as it was never made.† In the Display of the Secession Testimony,‡ there is an account of four overtures, the third of which seems to come the nearest to what you have recited. It was to this purpose; That, for the sake of peace, and to prevent different practices, when any under the inspection of the synod were proposing to become

* Re-exhibition, &c. page 261.

† See an Account of the Burgher Re-exhibition of the Testimony, page 14.

‡ Vol. ii. pages 36, 37, 38.

burgesses, they should be advised to take the burgess oaths without the said clause, till the members of the synod should come to see more clearly, eye to eye, in this matter. But such an advice would have implied the synod's allowance of the other clauses of these oaths, which had not yet come under their consideration. This overture overlooked the case of those who were already engaged in such burgess oaths. And these brethren would, by no means, grant, that such as would not follow the advice of the overture, should, in the mean time, be refused admission into the bond for renewing our covenants.

There was another overture for a mutual forbearance of one another in the present question; as being one of these things which was never matter of testimony in the church of Scotland, and which we never had attained.

The observations on this overture in the Display of the Secession Testimony, seem to be such plain truths as might carry conviction to every reflecting mind.

First, it is observed, with regard to the reason offered in support of this overture, that the matter of the present question, namely, the swearing of the religious clause in this period, could not have been a matter of testimony in any former period, more than the year 1746 could have existed in any former period.

There are various points of religious testimony attained now, that were not explicitly attained by our forefathers either in the first or second reformation. And it appears from a protestation made in 1638, which was recited in one of our former conversations, that, in their judgement, any general swearing to religion, without specifying all the points of testimony attained, would not be warrantable.

Again, it is to be observed, that the national profession and settlement of religion, (which, as we have seen, is acknowledged and approved in swearing the said religious clause,) are very different now from what they were then. The things which that clause refers to now, are very different from those things which it referred to then. In that respect, such a swearing of this religious clause, as that which is now in question, is a thing which had no being in the reforming covenanting period. The religious clause in some few burgess oaths, might not be adverted to by our reforming ancestors. But they manifested their adherence to the principle on which the associate synod proceeded, in the decision concerning that clause. An act of parliament was passed in the year 1633, ratifying all acts and statutes made before, concerning the liberty and freedom of the true kirk of God, and religion presently professed within this realm. From this act a considerable number of nobility, barons and burgesses dissented: The whole artifice of that act, says Rapin, in his history of England, consisted in these words, *religion presently professed:* for thereby were confirmed all the innovations in the discipline of the kirk of Scotland, which were so offensive to the opposers of that act. Would not they who condemned *an act of parliament* for referring to the present profession of the true religion which obtained before the reformation in 1638, have equally condemned *any oath*, if they had adverted to it, which referred no less to the same present profession; as liable to such a construction as that which is put on it by the historian just now mentioned.

Secondly, It is observed, that it is no wonder, that the synod could not comply with a proposal, which proceeded upon a doctrine of mutual forbearance, giving a toleration for a joint swearing of two oaths supposed to be contradictory, even in the general matter of religion.

But, Thirdly, upon the supposition of the synod's forbearing a present decision of the question, these brethren would, by no means, agree to forbear, in the mean time, an admission of those, engaged in such burgess oaths, into the bond for renewing the covenants; any more than if the synod had decided according to their mind. It could not therefore appear, that the forbearance proposed was genuine, or really mutual, or anywise calculated for preserving peace or for preventing different practices.

It may be added, that there was an obvious difference between the case of the one party and that of the other. It appears even from the overtures that were proposed by the defenders of this religious clause, that they did not consider the practice of swearing the said clause as necessary, or the prohibition of that practice as inconsistent with their religious profession. Some of them declined asserting the lawfulness of the burgess oath in its religious clause. One of the protesters* publicly declared, that he was not to be looked upon as having any freedom to stand in opposition to the decision of the synod condemning that clause. Besides, they might have agreed, that the swearing of this clause should be prohibited upon some of the grounds on which members of the synod reasoned against it; particularly, on this ground mentioned in the Display of the Secession Testimony,† namely, that the laws of civil society do not warrant the limiting of burgess privileges, to persons of the moral and religious qualifications requisite to the swearing of a solemn religious oath. But the case of the other party was very different. They understood this religious clause as an oath of formal and full communion with the established church in its present state; and as quite inconsistent with the maintenance of their profession in the way of a secession from that church. They also believed, that whoever should swear both this religious clause and the bond for renewing our covenants, would swear contradictory oaths. Hence it is evident, that all the conscience they made of holding their testimony in the way of secession from the established church, required them to condemn the swearing of that religious clause.

§ 68. *Alex.* I understand, that the question, which at last occasioned the rupture of the associate synod, was different from that about the lawfulness of swearing the religious clause of some burgess oaths.

Ruf. When the decision which has been recited, concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, was passed, five ministers and two elders protested against it, and proposed reasons of their protest. At the next meeting, which was in September 1746, two ministers and two elders, declared an adherence to their protest. At this meeting these protesting brethren introduced the question, Whether the decision of synod concerning the said clause should be a term of ministerial and christian communion? When the synod met in April, 1747, the consideration of that decision having been resumed, it was proposed,

* Mr. Hutton, minister at Stow. See a Display of the Secession Testimony, page 90.

† Page 33.

that the synod should proceed according to the usual order, to hear the reasons of protest, with the draught of answers, which had been prepared by a committee. But immediately the protesters renewed their former question about the said decision being a term of communion, in this new and larger form; namely, "Whether, or not, the decision "of synod concerning the religious clause of burgess oaths shall now "or afterwards be made a term of ministerial and christian commu-"nion; until the making of it to be so shall be referred, by way of "overture, to presbyteries and kirk-sessions, in order to their giving "their judgement concerning it: that so there may in the mean time, "be a friendly dealing among the members of the synod, in a way of "conference and prayer; in order to their coming, through the Lord's "pity, to see eye to eye, in the matter of the said religious clause?"

On Wednesday, the 8th day of April, the first day of this meeting after these protesting brethren had insisted, till it was very late, that a vote should be taken on this question, some proposed a previous question, namely, Whether, or not, the synod should immediately proceed to call for the reasons of the protest and the answers thereto, and to read and consider them? A third question was then proposed, namely, Whether the votes should be taken on the question of the protesters, or on the other question now mentioned? As it was carried, that the votes should be taken on the former, three ministers dissented from this resolution; and in the forenoon of the next day, their dissent was adhered to by nine other ministers and ten elders.

The necessity of the dissent from this resolution is evident. For, in the first place, the question itself on which the votes were to be taken, was, in this case, unwarrantable; as it supposed the synod to have a power which it could not have. It was competent to the synod to review their former decision, and, if they found it wrong, to reverse it. But they could have no just power to make a new decision by which the former would be materially reversed, and yet left formally standing. Such, however, is the purport of this question. It proposes to leave the synod's decision standing, to be considered formally as such by presbyteries and sessions, and, at the same time, to render that decision of no more effect, with regard to ministerial and christian communion, than if it had been reversed. Again, this question supposes the synod to have a power, which it could not have, to tolerate among their people, the swearing of the said religious clause; while the swearing of it at present is declared, in their standing act, to be contradictory to their bond for renewing the covenants, and to be inconsistent with the Secession Testimony as avouched in that bond. Farther, according to this question, a decision of synod,* in a controversy of faith or case of conscience, considered as a decision still formally standing, was to be referred to inferior judicatories, particularly to kirk-sessions in order to their judging, whether they should submit to it: as if a synod might warrantably say to subordinate judicatories

* "This is a false charge," (say the defenders of this question, Re-exhibition &c. page 272) "for it was not the decision, but the question concerning its being a term of commu-"nion, that was proposed to be transmitted." But the fact is, that these two points cannot be separated: for, as one justly observes, neither sense nor conscience can admit of judging, that the sentence should not be a term of communion, but in the way of judging it to be wrong. They seem themselves to be sensible of this, when they add, "Though "it had been the decision, yet the transmission of it was necessary."

concerning an act in which they have made a just application of the word of Christ to a particular case; *You may be either under the obligation of this act, or not so, as you shall judge proper.* Nothing could be more contrary to the nature of presbyterial, or scriptural church government than such a proposal. It is true, that no synods or councils, since the days of the apostles, are infallible; but if the fallibility of courts of judicature, without sufficient evidence of their having actually erred, be allowed to deprive their decisions of obligatory force and operation, the authority and use of courts, civil and ecclesiastic, will soon be at an end.

In the second place, the proposal of taking the votes of the synod on this question, before the reasons of protest and the answers to them were read and considered, was unjust; as the decision concerning the said clause was thereby liable to be materially reversed or annulled; while the members of the court were precluded from the benefit of the most proper means of obtaining light as to the merits of the cause. To call members to vote on any question, and at the same time to withhold the means necessary for enabling them to vote with judgement, cannot be denied to be most unbecoming a court of Christ, which, above all other courts of judicature, is bound to search after knowledge, and to judge righteously.

Alex. The burghers say, that this charge of suppressing the light, which was to be had by hearing the reasons of protest and the answers to them, is false. For in case it was for light and information to members, the synod was content that all should be read. But the separating brethren, say they, evidently designed victory more than light: for unless their brethren, who protested against that decision, should be held pannels or parties, they themselves would not suffer these reasons and answers to be read. They say farther, these separating brethren themselves occasioned their not being read at the meeting immediately preceding, at Stirling.*

Ruf. These brethren solemnly protested, that they had no other design in requiring the reasons of protest to be first read and considered, than that the doing so was necessary according to good order and for the information of members. And there seems to be no ground from the facts established for supposing that they had any other design. The charge, on the other hand, against the party of the protesters, of suppressing light by getting the votes of the synod taken on their question without the previous hearing of the said reasons and answers, cannot be disproved by the instances you have mentioned. The fact is not denied: it is only alleged, that they had inducements or temptations to do as they did. When it was said, that those, who composed the committee appointed to prepare answers to the reasons of protest, occasioned that they were not read in the preceding meeting at Stirling, it should have been added, that they had not been able to finish their draught of them before that meeting. Nor should this failure be imputed to them as a fault; since it is not denied, that the court had admitted their excuse, on account of sacramental occasions and other necessary duties, to be sufficient. With regard to the assertion, that the defenders of the decision concerning the said religious clause would not suffer these reasons and the answers to them to be read, un-

* Re-exhibition, pages 174, 175.

less the protesters should be pannels or parties; the fact alluded to is thus represented by one who was fully acquainted with all that passed on this occasion. In the course of reasoning on the 9th of April, when a hearing of the reasons and answers was still urged, one of the protesters, (without being contradicted by the rest,) proposed to yield to a previous reading of them, upon this condition, that the voting of their question should immediately follow without any farther reasoning on the subject.* Were not the fact so ascertained as to leave no room to doubt it, one could scarcely conceive, that any member would seriously propose, as a condition of the court's observing a point of common and necessary order, the consent of their brethren to the voting of a question immediately after; while these brethren had been all along, and were now openly and earnestly contending against the synod's voting on such a question at all; under a full conviction, that their doing so, as the case was circumstanced, was incompetent to the court, and exceeding sinful. The proposal does not seem to have been seconded; and no wonder considering the gross impropriety of it.

Alex. It has been said, that in September, 1746, and on August 8th, 1747, the opposers of this question allowed, that it was lawful and regular to vote on it; though they afterward reckoned it a criminal question.†

Ruf. It is evident, that the defenders of the synod's decision, opposed voting on this question from the first proposal of it. In September, 1746, after long and earnest contending against it, they obtained a delay; and such a delay as its friends then accounted not an allowance, but a material rejection of it.‡ On the 8th of April, 1747, they endeavoured by a previous question to get it set aside; insisting all along on the inconsistency of it with the profession and constitution of the synod. On the next day, they opposed it in the way of solemn protestations. Thus they used all proper means for preventing the synod from voting on this question. Some of these members, indeed, acknowledged their sin in giving so much countenance to the putting of this question, as to offer an opposite side to it, or to vote the delay of it. But no candid person, who attends to the history of this affair, will deny that their opposition, though sometimes not carried so far as it might have been, was all along open and decided. They gave no ground for any to say, that they ever allowed it to be lawful and regular, for the synod, to vote on such a question. These endeavours indeed were unsuccessful. The protesters and their party, after it was carried, as I have already stated, for the synod's voting on their question, urged, that the votes of the members should be taken immediately. But the moderator and clerk declined acting on this occasion. So that the step which was the immediate cause of the rupture might have been prevented at that time, if two members had not presumed, without any appointment of the court, to act, the one as moderator in calling the names, and the other as clerk in marking the votes. Twenty members voted in the affirmative; of whom six ministers and one elder, being protesters against the decision concerning the reli-

* Display of the Secession Testimony, page 328.

† An Impartial Survey, &c. And Re-exhibition, &c. page 269.

‡ Display, &c. pages 338, 339.

gious clause of some burgess oaths, were directly parties in this question. The twenty-three members, who were standing under a solemn protestation against the putting of such a question, could not vote. On this event, a member who had been moderator of the former meeting declared, that as those who had gone into a resolution to transmit the decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths to presbyteries and sessions in order to their judging, whether that decision should be a term of communion, had, in so doing, departed from the constitution and testimony of the associate synod; so the constitution of that court remained in the majority of ministers, who had all along at this meeting, contended against voting on that question, and also a considerable number of elders; together with any members, who might adhere to them; and proposed, that they should meet next day, at ten o'clock, forenoon, in Mr. Gib's house, in order to proceed in the business of the synod.

§ 69. *Alex.* As it is often the case in battles, that both sides claim the victory; so, each party, on this occasion, pretended to have the majority of votes. The burghers say they had a majority, thirty-two against twenty-two.*

Ruf. At the meeting of synod, in which that melancholy event took place, there were present twenty-nine of the thirty-two ministers who then belonged to the synod, with twenty-four elders. Twenty members, namely, six ministers and one elder, who had protested against the decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, with three other ministers and ten elders, voted in the affirmative, against twenty-three, consisting of thirteen ministers and ten elders, who, as has been observed, all along opposed this question in the most decisive and solemn manner.† The rest of the members were silent. Even though all the twenty, who voted for the affirmative on this question, had been legal voters, there was still a majority against it. But of these twenty, the seven protesters, as they were directly parties on the subject of the question, could not be legal voters. And with regard to thirteen of them, to whose right of voting no objection was ever offered, there was reason to say, that twelve of them voted without any proper knowledge of the subject of their vote. Two of them were ministers; of whom one had never been in the synod before. And the other minister, with the ten elders who voted on the same side, had not been present at any judicial examination of the subject. The case was the same with the elders on the side of those who were refusing to vote at all; but this was the very reason of their refusal, that they had not had an opportunity of understanding what they were to vote about.

Alex. On what ground, then, did the friends of this question pretend, that they had a majority of votes on their side.

Ruf. They reckoned, among the voters on their side, the moderator; (though, when they were proceeding to put the question, he refused to

* Re-exhibition, &c. page 261.

† That the number of those, who stood under a protestation against the question about the synod's decision being a term of communion was twenty-three, is not disputed; viz. thirteen ministers, Messrs. Alexander Moncrief, Thomas Mair, James Thomson, Adam Gib, Andrew Clarkson, James Scot, George Brown, William Campbell, John Whyte, George Murray, Robert Archibald and William Mair, with ten elders.

call the roll, and immediately left them for that night;) and also, an absent elder, falsely supposed to be on their side. But when these two were added, they were still the minority; and therefore they reckoned to their side six ministers and two elders, who had not voted. Silent members may be added to the majority; but adding them to the minority is unusual in courts.

These silent members, indeed, continuing with the twenty voters, seemed to form a prevailing party, at that juncture, on the side of the voted resolution. But as the carrying of that resolution, in the manner now related, subverted the constitution of the associate synod; so a majority, made up in this manner, could not be justly accounted that court. Besides, it may be reasonably allowed, that in point of form, this title belongs to that party which, at the rupture, had the majority of ministers, who are the only constant and habitual members of the synod. It was then found, that these seven protesters had got no more than five ministers of the synod to take part with them in forming a synod upon the ground of the resolution which occasioned the rupture; while nineteen ministers remained in the opposite body on the ground of a just and scriptural decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths; a decision, the obvious design of which was no other, than that of maintaining the profession of the true religion, as it is stated in the Judicial Testimony, and the bond agreed on by the associate presbytery. It is contrary to presbyterial order, and even to the common principles of society, to suppose, that the minority of a court can become that court, in opposition to the majority; excepting in the case of the minority being so constituted by a superior court, to which it is subordinate. It was, therefore, most unreasonable, for twelve ministerial members, without the judgement of any superior court, to assume to themselves the name and power of the associate synod, in opposition to nineteen ministerial members. When the heat of passion and prejudice is over, it will be easily seen, that this conduct is contrary to Presbyterian parity, and even to the humility and brotherly love which are so necessary in the followers, and especially in the ministers, of Jesus Christ.

§ 70. *Alex.* The defenders of the synod's decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, reckon, that the protesters against that decision were parties in the question about its being a term of communion. But those on the other side, judged, that they would rather have been parties, if the question had been about reversing the decision.

Ruf. No manner or degree in which persons may have previously appeared on one side of a public cause in the church, can make it their personal cause, or make them such parties as have no right to judge in it. How absurd would it be to suppose, that our reformers were parties in the cause between them and the church of Rome, having no right to judge in it, after they had protested against it, or had become Protestants.

In the proceedings of the synod of Dort, against the Remonstrants or Arminians, who then insisted, that such as had avowed their opposition to them on these points, should not be admitted as judges of their cause, there is a just observation to this purpose; "What rea-

"son," said the English divines in that synod, "can be given for "depriving of the right of suffrage, in this matter, all the pas- "tors, who, in the discharge of their office, had defended the re- "ceived doctrine of the church, and opposed such as taught other- "wise? Were this measure adopted, no minister would oppose the "spread of new doctrines, lest he should thereby lose all right of "afterwards giving his judgement in controversies about them. It "is an error to suppose, that the pastors, in this way, become judges "in their own cause. Truth is the common treasure of the church; "nor can it by any means become the private property of individuals. "It is the public cause of God and the church, not any one's personal "cause, that is debated in the synods."*

These protesters, then, would not have been parties in the question, Whether that decision should be reversed? that being a matter purely doctrinal. But they were evidently parties in the question, Whether that decision should be a term of communion? as that would have been, upon the matter, an inquiry, whether any of these protesters should be called to an account for their opposition to that decision? To say that they were not parties in this question, and that they might be judges of it, is as unreasonable, as it would be to say, that a person is not a party, but may act as a judge in a cause concerning himself, which has been committed to the verdict of a jury.

Alex. The friends of the decision have been much blamed for saying that ministers, and not elders or kirk sessions, are the proper judges in controversies of faith and cases of conscience; or in such a question as this; Whether the synod's decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, should be a term of communion?

Ruf. When ministers are called the proper judges in a controversy of faith or case of conscience, ruling elders are not excluded from being judges, in a secondary sense, in the way of assisting ministers, but not to the overbearing of them. It must be held, however, according to the holy scripture and our subordinate standards, that the judicial determination of doctrinal controversies properly belongs to those to whom the Lord Jesus has committed the key of doctrine; which is explained in the Judicial Testimony, to be "for expounding "and preaching the word, and for determining controversies accord- "ing to the scriptures." The office of the elders, of whom we now speak, is expressly limited to ruling and government; and is hereby distinguished from that of other elders, who labour in word and doctrine, Rom. xii. 8—1 Corinth. xii. 28—1 Tim. v. 17. The second book of discipline teaches concerning the elders, that their principal office is to hold assemblies with the pastors, for the establishing of good order and the execution of discipline. The Westminster assembly's form of church government lays this down as comprehending the whole business of elders, "that they are to join with the "minister in the government of the church." In February, 1597, a

* Quæ ratio reddi potest, cur suffragiorum jure priventur omnes illi pastores, qui ex officio receptam ecclesiæ doctrinam propugnantes, secus docentibus adversati sunt? Si hoc obtineret, noxa dogmata spargentibus nemo obsisteret, ne, ipso facto, jus omne postmodum de illis controversiis judicandi amitterent. In eo erratur, quod pastores in sua causa hoc modo judices esse præsumuntur. Veritas communis ecclesiæ thesaurus est; nec potest ullo pacto fieri peculium singularum personarum. Dei et ecclesiæ publica causa est, non sua cujuscunque quæ in synodis agitur.

question having been proposed by king James about those who should have a vote in synodical assemblies, some brethren out of the several presbyteries of the synod of Fife, gave this answer: "Such as have "commission from particular sessions of congregations have vote; except in matters of doctrine, wherein only they that labour in the word "may vote and judge." The reformed church of France determines in the third chapter of their discipline, that "Elders may well assist "and give their opinion; but the decision of doctrine is principally "reserved to ministers and pastors, and to doctors of divinity duly "called to their charges." In their national assembly in 1598, they determined, "that when there is a question of the judgement of "doctrine, the decision of it belongs to the ministers only." With regard to kirk sessions in a constituted state of the church, it is granted, that they are proper judges of what is the acknowledged doctrine of the church, for the maintenance of it in their several congregations: but it is denied that they, as courts of judicature, may pass decisions about what should be the acknowledged doctrine of the church, in matters of public controversy. To allow such a judgement to ruling elders, as distinct from teaching elders, would overthrow the doctrine of our standards, by placing the decisive exercise, the highest exercise, of the key of doctrine, where the Lord Jesus never placed it.

Alex. The resolution to transmit the decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths to presbyteries and kirk sessions, is said to be according to some barrier acts, particularly, the act of the assembly in 1639, ordaining, "that no innovation, which may "disturb the peace of the church and make divisions, be suddenly "enacted, but so as the motion be first communicated to the several "synods, presbyteries and kirk sessions, that the commissioners may "come well prepared, unanimously to conclude a solid determination "upon these points in the general assembly."

Ruf. The synod's declaring that they have found something in the practice of church members, which is inconsistent with their public profession, and which is therefore to be avoided, cannot, with any propriety, be called an innovation. No new tenet or new usage was introduced by the decision in question. Besides, there is reason to believe, that the act you have mentioned, relates to overtures concerning matters of order and government, and not to doctrine; because this act directs the proposal to be communicated to kirk sessions, which are not properly judges of doctrines, being mostly made up of elders, to whom, as has been just now observed, the cognizance of matters of discipline and government, rather than of doctrine, belongs. The enacting of something new, with regard to order, may often be delayed with advantage, or at least without any loss. But the case is very different, when it is required to determine what is truth and duty, or what is sin and error. The glory of God, and the near concern which men's consciences have in such questions, render the speedy determination of them necessary. Such, in an eminent degree, was the question about the consistency of swearing the religious clause of some burgess oaths with the testimony and bond that had been agreed on by the associate presbytery.

Alex. The account you have given of the moderator and clerk, as declining to act, when the vote was taken on the question which occasioned the rupture; and of others, as taking upon them, without any order of the court, to call the names and mark the votes, seems not to be admitted by the defenders of that question. "Did not the "moderator," says one of them, "acquiesce by continuing to sit in "court, after the sentence was passed, in April 9th?"* "The "minutes bear," says another of them, "that Henry Erskine was "appointed to clerk by turns with Mr. Hutton."†

Ruf. The same account was repeatedly published in the proceedings of the associate synod, soon after the event took place;‡ and none of those then present are known to have called this account in question. The writer of the Display of the Secession Testimony, who was an actor in this mournful scene, and who had better means of information, than any of the authors you refer to, says concerning Mr. James Mair, who had been chosen moderator by the synod at that meeting, that he was in the chair at the time when the two resolutions were before the synod; and that he acted as moderator with respect to the first; but that it is a most notorious fact, that with respect to the second resolution, he persisted in making no return, when intreated to call, or to order the calling of the roll. The writer of the Display also avers in the most absolute manner, that the minute which Mr. Brown cites, as bearing, that Mr. Henry Erskine was appointed to clerk by turns, is a false minute, if it refer to the time before the breach, being what could not have existed till after it. It is true, adds that writer, "that Mr. Hutton demurred at taking the "office of clerk, from the constancy of attendance which it would "require. But no mention was made of Henry Erskine for doing so, "I was the person fixed on, and named as such in the original minute. "All which I am as certain of as I can be of any thing that has been "transacted in my time."‖

Alex. Might not the members who adhered to the synod's decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths have submitted to the determination for transmitting that decision to presbyteries and kirk sessions; while their consciences was exonerated by their protestations?

Ruf. They could not have acquiesced in the manner in which this question was carried, without allowing the minority to be the court; nor without allowing disorders inconsistent with its constitution, such as, that a court might determine a cause so important, as that must necessarily be, which respects the profession of religion in general, without hearing what was evidently necessary to the understanding of the merits of that cause; that parties may be admitted to be judges in their own personal cause; and that any member or members may, without any designation or appointment of the court, and at their own hand, act as moderator and clerk. They could not have acquiesced in the carrying of this question in the affirmative, without

* Survey of the Controversy, &c. page 70.

† Mr. Brown, in his letter to Mr. Gib.

‡ See their proceedings in 1747, page 17—and those in 1749 and 1750, page 10.

‖ Display, &c. pages 425, 426.

allowing a resolution as a deed of the court, which tolerated the swearing of an oath, which, as it comes necessarily to be used and applied at present, was declared by another deed of the same court left professedly standing, to be inconsistent with the profession and testimony of Seceders: and considering, that Seceders were engaged by solemn oath in the bond agreed on by the associate presbytery, to adhere to that profession and testimony, I do not see how it can be denied, that this resolution involves them in the guilt of allowing the swearing of contradictory oaths. They could not have acquiesced in the carrying of this resolution, without falling away from their testimony against the latitudinarian scheme of church communion. It appears, that the decision of synod concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, was all along opposed upon latitudinarian principles. The protesters against that decision say in their ninth reason, "Upon supposition, that we should grant that there is sufficient objective evidence unto all, that the swearing of the clause condemned "would be doing a thing, which virtually and on the matter, is a sinful receding from the testimony of the day, which we are professing "to hold; yet, when the swearing of it is but newly quarrelled, the "synod ought rather to have enjoined mutual forbearance, than to "have condemned the present swearing of the said clause." Here it it is taught, that though there be sufficient objective evidence to all of the sinfulness of this matter; that is, though its sinfulness be plain enough to any who are not uncommonly blind or prejudiced; though it be plainly enough backsliding and a profanation of the Lord's name; yet it is to be tolerated, under a pretence of novelty, and on account of different sentiments about it. This cannot be denied to be one of these latitudinarian tenets abjured in the bond agreed on by the associate presbytery. But this scheme was carried to a far greater height in the resolution which occasioned the breach: for, by that resolution, a practice was to be tolerated, which was not only sinful, but declared to be so by a judicial decision, which, by this resolution, is professedly left standing. Thus, the church was to admit to her sacramental communion persons who persisted obstinately in a practice determined by her judicial deed to be sinful. This was a flagrant instance of the catholic sacramental communion, which we formerly examined.

Alex. The opposers of the decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, represent the synod which met at Mr. Gib's house, as a different synod from that which had chosen the moderator and clerk, and from that to which the elders had been sent by their several sessions. Though the person, who called that nominal synod, asserted, in his declaration, that the power of the synod devolved upon him and his party; yet, he neither did, nor could, shew any warrant for his saying or doing so.*

Ruf. If the friends of that decision concerning some burgess oaths were the majority; and were holding the constitutional principles of the associate synod; (two things, which were certainly true,) the proposal of adjourning to another time and place, could not make them another court. It is vain to ask what warrant a member had to make such a proposal? for, in so doing, he only made use of a privilege

* Re-exhibition, &c. pages 266, 267, 268.

common to all the members of the court; the privilege of making any motion which they judge proper. And if there was nothing unlawful in the proposal, it was warrantable for the members of the court to agree to it, and to act accordingly. What was extraordinary in this proposal, was rendered necessary by the extraordinary resolution which they who voted on this occasion pretended to have carried; and by the extraordinary case of the minority of a court assuming to themselves the name and authority of the court in such a violent manner, as could not be obstructed by any means competent to an ecclesiastical court.

§ 71. *Alex.* There is nothing that has raised such an odium against the friends of the decision concerning some burgess oaths, as their pretending to depose and excommunicate their brethren.

Ruf. This odium has been much increased by erroneous doctrine about the objects of excommunication. This awful censure has been represented as having no other than graceless persons for the objects of it: a representation which is contrary to the gracious end of the ordinances in general which Christ hath given to his church; and particularly to the end of excommunication; by which obstinate offenders are to be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.* The justly celebrated Turretine, in stating the Protestant doctrine on this head, observes, that excommunication may be considered either with regard to the outward or the inward state of the person who is the object of it. As to his outward state, it denotes a real separation from the external communion of the church, yet not perpetual, but for a time; that is, till he manifest his repentance. But as to his inward state, it is not a real expulsion from the mystical body of Christ; for he who is once taken into that body, can never be cast out of it. We are not immediately to conclude, that an offender is simply and absolutely cut off from the body of Christ, or that he ceases to be a member of the church in secret, and as to his internal state; because he is for a time, according to external discipline, removed from the society of the faithful. Many regenerate persons, says Mr. Rutherford, may go so far in scandalous obstinacy, that they are to be excommunicated. This odium has also been promoted by such as have taught, that there are real violations of the Divine law, which though they be public offences, and contumaciously persisted in, and properly matters of judicial cognizance; which, after all, can never be any sufficient ground of excommunication. This doctrine is contrary to what

* 1 Corinth. v. 4, 5. The terms used by the apostle (*to deliver unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,*) cannot mean a miraculous inflicting of some tormenting pain or disease upon the man's body; or an extraordinary permission given to Satan for that purpose. For if it had been any work of this sort, the apostle would not have blamed the Corinthians, as he did, for not having wrought it sooner; while no such thing was competent to them; nor could he have sought, as he did, the concurrence or assistance of the Corinthians for working it. He could not have called it, as he did in 2 Corinth. ii. 6, this punishment, or, as the original might be rendered, judicial *censure, which was inflicted of many:* nor could he have mentioned the man's hazard of being *swallowed up with overmuch sorrow,* as the proper effect of the censure; without taking any notice of the pain or disease, if there had been any such effect, on his body. It was not, therefore, any destruction of his body, but of his fleshly corruption, that the apostle meant; the censure being a mean of the Lord's institution for that purpose.

Display of the Secession Testimony, pages 102, 103.

our Lord has delivered in Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17, 18, as the ordinary and standing rule of discipline; according to which rule, any brother, who is chargeable with such obstinacy, even in any private offence, as *not to hear the church*, or assembly of rulers, when the case is regularly declared to them, is an object of the greater excommunication. The doctrine now mentioned, is also contrary to that of the reformed churches on this head. According to *the order of excommunication*, used in the church of Scotland under her first reformation, "a small "offence may justly deserve excommunication, by reason of the con-"tempt and disobedience of the offender." And, in another place, we have these words: "After all admonitions, both private and pub-"lic, are past, as before is said; then, must the church proceed to "excommunication, if the offender remain obstinate."*

The discipline of the church of France ordains, "that process "should issue in the higher excommunication against any of the peo-"ple that keep up a debate for breaking the unity of the church, "upon any point of doctrine or discipline, or public worship and "order; and that this course should be taken more especially with "any minister or elder, who is found guilty this way, upon any such "point, contrary to his former engagements."†

Many think that the censures of the church must have been prostituted, when they were passed on these pious and faithful ministers, who were some of the greatest lights of the age in which they lived. But no person in the world is beyond all hazard of falling into offences, and even, for a time, into obstinacy in them. According to the scriptural institution of the discipline of the christian church, any person, whose offence renders him justly liable to the lowest censure belonging to that discipline, may, by persisting in his offence with unrelenting obstinacy, become liable to the highest: and the Divine rule requires the actual infliction of due censure in the latter case, as well as in the former. The offence, however, of these brethren was not small; as it consisted in justifying the practice of Seceders in swearing an oath, which had been judicially declared inconsistent with their testimony, and with the bond in which they solemnly vowed adherence to that testimony. Nor was their offence small, in taking such measures for the defence of that practice, as tended not only to subvert the order and constitution of the associate synod, but to support and propagate the latitudinarian scheme of church communion which is so much the idol of the present age.

* Order of Excommunication, chapters ii. and iii. The church's power of excommunicating the obstinate in public offences is declared in the sum of the first Book of Discipline, art. 9, and in the second Book of Discipline, chap. 7. In conformity to these rules, the general assembly in 1638, ordained procedure to excommunication against those who, after due admonition, would not forbear the company of excommunicated persons;—in 1640, against any minister, who should obstinately continue to speak against the covenant for religion and reformation, then entered into by the church;—in 1638, against any suspended minister, who should obstinately continue to exercise any part of the ministerial office.

† As the faults of church officers deserve the greatest censures; so, in all the reformed churches, where the free exercise of church discipline is received, there is the greatest severity of it against church officers, and especially against ministers of the word, when any such are, upon just proof, convicted of scandal.

Aaron Rod Blossoming, page 314.

Some have represented this censure as an excommunication of all the people called burghers, comparing it to the excommunications of the Pope by which he laid whole nations under his interdict, confounding the innocent with the guilty. But this was a groundless reproach. They who passed these censures, were, as we have seen, the majority which, at the rupture, constituted the associate synod; and therefore it was competent to them, as it is to every court, to call their own members to an account; and, in the case of offences proved against any of their members, to censure them. The persons, then, whom the synod censured, were no other than certain members of that court; and the synod, in censuring them, proceeded in their several cases, upon such particular and specific charges, as were applicable to them only.

In fine, some have said, that the ministers, who passed such censures on their brethren, required the approbation of them as a term of church communion. This accusation is not only false in fact, but grossly absurd; as it is not supposable, that the officers of any church, at least of any Presbyterian church, are so unreasonable as to make an approbation of the proceedings of church-courts in cases of discipline, a term or condition upon which people in general, (few of whom may have any opportunity of being acquainted with such proceedings) are to be admitted to sacramental communion.

§ 72. *Alex.* The opposers of the synod's decision concerning some burgess oaths justly deplore the dispute between them and the defenders of that decision as very fruitless, and as having done much injury to interests of real religion by alienating the affections of professors from one another.

Ruf. It is granted, that this controversy had the common effect of every dispute about any matter, civil or religious, in which the interests and feelings of depraved men are much concerned: it irritated the minds of those engaged in it, and interrupted the comfortable enjoyment of social intercourse. But it had also other consequences, which were according to the opposite sides which the parties took in the dispute.

With regard to those who adhered to the decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, there were two native consequences of their adherence to it. One was, that they continued to hold the Judicial Testimony as a term of communion with them in sealing ordinances, according to what had been agreed on by the associate presbytery. The presbytery, says Mr. Wilson of Perth, require of all who "accede to them, or who come under their presbyterial inspection, that they signify or declare their approbation of the judicial act "and testimony. The plain and obvious meaning of this is, that they "signify or declare their conjunction with the presbytery in the same "confession that they make of the truths of God. In this respect, the "presbytery, and such as make accession to them, state themselves a "confessing body; and the confession which they make is of the truths "of God in opposition to deviations from the same."* The other consequence of their adherence to the decision concerning the said religious clause, was their continuing to go forward, according to the

* Continuation, &c. chap. 5.

agreement of the associate presbytery, in the practice of public covenanting.

With regard to the opposers of the decision concerning the said religious clause, the consequences of their opposition have been according to the nature of what they opposed. Some of them at first represented the swearing of that clause as perfectly agreeable to the Judicial Testimony. But this pretence was soon given up. They found, that the inconsistency between the swearing of that clause and the approving of the whole account which that Testimony gives of the profession of religion authorised by the laws of the land, was too glaring to be absolutely denied. They published, therefore, an overture in the year 1755, pretending to point out some mistakes in the historical part of that Testimony. A considerable time afterward, they published their Re-exhibition, containing, among other things, an edition of the Judicial Testimony; in which some passages of the original work are omitted and some altered; though they have not been able to establish the falsehood of the statement of one fact in the original work.* But in the preface to the Re-exhibition, there is an attempt to depreciate the historical part, particularly in the following words, which I shall read: "It becomes those concerned chiefly to know and profess what "is of the utmost importance, the certainty of which rests upon the "infallible record of God himself, and not on the fallible narratives of "men, which in themselves can never be a sufficient ground of our "faith. To be ignorant or mistaken with regard to the real existence "of some past transactions, in the church or state, transmitted to us "upon human authorities, some of which are controverted by others of "the same class, and others of them covered with a cloud of uncer-"tainty, which to us at this distance of time, is almost impenetrable, "can never be so criminal, as our ignorance or mistakes with respect "to the truths of God revealed in his word. It must, *therefore*, be "obvious to every sober and unbiassed christian, that an attempt to "elucidate some historical references, or even to omit others, which "do not appear to be sufficiently vouched, cannot with any degree of "candour and justice amount to a dropping of any part of the Testi-"mony, as it is a testimony to the truths of God revealed in his word."

On this passage it may be remarked, that, though it is true, that what is of the utmost importance rests on the infallible record of God himself, and not on the fallible narratives of men; and though in making a comparison between the real existence of some past transactions in church and state, and the truths of God revealed in his word, there is no doubt, that to be ignorant or mistaken with regard to the former is not so criminal as our ignorance or mistakes with regard to the latter; (just as robbing a man of his money, though it is criminal, is not so much so as taking away his life unjustly;) yet it does not follow, that the testimony which God is calling us to maintain against errors and corruptions in any part of the visible church, may not be, in a great measure, if not wholly dropt, by not owning what comes to our knowledge by the fallible narratives of men. For it is plain, that the ground on which we maintain a testimony against the errors and corruptions of any church, and particularly in the way of secession from her communion, is not merely that such tenets are errors and that such practices

* This is shewn satisfactorily in Mr. Gib's account of the Re-exhibition.

are corruptions; a matter which we are to learn from the word of God alone; but also, that such errors and corruptions are tolerated and justified by the judicatories of that church; a fact which cannot be known by reading the Bible, or otherwise than by human narratives; on which, though fallible, while they are attended with moral certainty, we are, in this case, to proceed.

In a former conversation, it was shewn, that there are various duties, which cannot be discharged without proceeding upon human testimony; of which duties, that of testifying against the errors and corruptions, that prevail in the visible church, is one. However many truths of God's word a body of people may profess and maintain in the form of a testimony; yet if they withdraw from a particular church, without any historical proof of defection from such truths, or of the toleration of the contrary errors, as chargeable on that church, their secession, in that case, may be justly considered as a sinful and scandalous schism. Such a narrative, therefore, necessarily belongs to the ground of a secession testimony. The testimony of the prophets and apostles did not consist of abstract doctrinal propositions only; but included real facts. They said, for example, From the days of your fathers, ye are gone away from mine ordinances: ye have killed the Prince of life: ye are removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel: ye observe days and months and times and years. It is granted, that the prophets and apostles, in the testimony they gave against the errors and corruptions of persons and churches, proceeded upon the infallible knowledge they had of the cases of these persons and churches by immediate inspiration; but this is nothing against our imitating them in this as well as in other moral duties, or against our proceeding, in the ordinary way, upon the fallible narratives of men; or, as the scripture warrants us to proceed in such cases, upon the testimony of a competent number of credible witnesses. Such is the ground upon which the confessors of Christ have always proceeded with regard to the real existence of the errors and corruptions against which they bore testimony, ever since the canon of scripture was closed. In point of evidence, few narratives of fallible men have been less liable to exception, or farther from being covered with a cloud of uncertainty, than the historical part of the Judicial Testimony; the facts there stated, being found, as we formerly observed, in the most public and authentic records of the kingdom. And with regard to the nature of the facts, they are very proper for the place they have in that testimony; as they are either instances of the Lord's goodness to his people, and of what good he enabled them to do, which are proposed as matter of thankfulness; or instances, of such public evils as are standing grounds of the Lord's controversy, to be acknowledged as matter of humiliation. Thus opposition to the synod's decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths led those engaged in it to propagate opinions contrary to an honest adherence to the Judicial Testimony. Conformable to such opinions has been their admission of people to their communion in sealing ordinances, without requiring of them an acquaintance with that testimony, and their not bringing ministers at their ordination under an engagement to maintain it in the terms agreed upon by the associate presbytery.*

* Mr. Morison's Present Duty, page 98.

It is well known, that ever since the rupture, which was occasioned by their opposition to the decision concerning some burgess oaths, they have declined and even opposed the practice of public covenanting, as it was agreed on by the associate presbytery. And as they broke with their brethren by voting for a resolution which was grossly latitudinarian, as it allowed church members to continue in the practice of swearing an oath which was condemned by their own decision unrepealed, as inconsistent with the Judicial Testimony and with the bond or covenant engagement which they had agreed to enter into for maintaining that testimony; so it is no wonder, if lax principles with regard to church communion have prevailed among them. If we may judge of the decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, by the consequences of adherence and of opposition to it, we will be led to consider it as most agreeable to the principles of the associate presbytery. For the friends of that decision considered themselves as bound to maintain the deeds of the associate presbytery, particularly, their Judicial Testimony, and their act for renewing the covenants, national and solemn league; while the opposite party have not scrupled to deviate from these acts.

Alex. Does not this affair shew the schismatical spirit of the Seceders, and how easily any collision of opinions may split them into factions? I wonder how they could think of separating from the two Erskines and Mr. Fisher, who were more eminent in the public esteem as pious and evangelical ministers, than any other that I know belonging to the Secession.

Ruf. The ministers, who defended the decision concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, declared that they did not yield to any in veneration and affection for these fathers. But they found themselves obliged to sacrifice personal regards and heart attachments to what they justly considered as an important part of the cause and testimony of Jesus Christ. On this point I shall read you a passage of a valuable performance on church communion.* "A single error," says the judicious writer of that letter, "in the church is of dangerous "consequence. It dishonours God in all the duties which the church "conjunctly performs. Consider her as bearing a testimony for the "truth, this error is an exception. Again, if this error is positively in-"troduced into the worship of God, the worship of the whole body is, "in this article, absurd and inconsistent with the mind of God revealed "in his word. But if it is not introduced, then is the church charge-"able with sin, in neglecting to introduce into her worship what she "has adopted as an article of her creed. Consider it farther as affect-"ing their general communion together by way of exhortation, admo-"nition or reproof; this single error is an exception to the perfection "thereof. This one sin, at least, they do not warn against nor reprove "for. In a word, their whole communion on this article, wherein they "err, is dishonouring to God and hurtful to themselves. I, therefore, "cannot help thinking, that it is better for the church, respecting her "communion, to suffer the loss of persons than of purity. The church "of God has, in every age of the world, suffered a diminution of her "visible members on account of her struggling for the maintenance of

* The Criterion, by Mr. Muir, in Ireland, near the end.

"purity in the matter of her communion. The truth is, if the fear of "schisms were to guide the people of God in the matter of their com-"munion, I believe, they would never stop, till they would have nei-"ther union nor communion; that is, they would be no church at all. "It is, however, comfortable to think, that, if the enemy is always "striving to break the union of God's people, and always throwing in "some new bone of contention among them for this purpose; Christ "is always interceding at God's right hand for the preservation of it.* "As to the conduct of Seceders with regard to their brethren who "opposed the decision concerning some burgess oaths, I think, that, "in the main, it tends much to their praise. They thereby signified "to the world their firmness to the testimony they had espoused: for "rather than countenance an oath, plainly inconsistent with the pro-"fession they had made, they, in their infantile state, when few and "despised, would suffer a schism in their body."

Alex. I have heard that a coalition of these two parties is now proposed.

Ruf. It would be lamentable, indeed, if both parties were to agree in burying the witnessing profession of the associate presbytery; for the preservation of which the decision concerning the said religious clause was manifestly designed. But it would be a most desirable event, if the parties would agree to maintain the testimony as it was stated by the associate presbytery, and to join in the bond which was agreed on by them for the renovation of the covenants, national and solemn league; acknowledging the sinfulness of their having, in so great a measure, given up that good work, after it was begun. When church members are brought to a humbling sense of the evil of the latitudinarian schemes, which have so much prevailed in the Protestant churches, they will not be backward to acknowledge the sinfulness of the resolution, which occasioned the rupture. They will then return to their first standing, and will be for a name and praise to the Lord Christ through the world. This union is not to be despaired of; for the accomplishment of it is easy to him who gathereth the outcasts of Israel.

* John xvii. 11, 21, 22, 23.

DIALOGUE VI.

Introduction of the Secession church into America.....The unfavourable reception which the Seceding ministers met with on their arrival in this country.....The support of the Secession Testimony, in this country, justified.....Occasional communion with various denominations opposed by the Seceders.....Errors propagated among those of the Presbyterian denomination, without being judicially censured.....The singing of the hymns of Dr. Watts and others, in public worship, an unwarrantable innovation.....Private baptism a ground of complaint.....Public worship, without a sent or called minister or preacher, an unwarrantable innovation in a constituted state of the Presbyterian church.....A church's assent to the Westminster confession of faith rendered unavailing by her obstinate persisting in the open avowal and justification of evils contrary to it.....The testimony of Seceders consistent with that of the witnesses for truth in former ages..... The subordination of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania to the Associate Synod in Scotland justifiable.....A change in the public profession of the Seceding ministers by their union with those of the Reformed Presbytery.....Some standing testimony besides the Westminster confession of faith necessary in the present state of the church..... Conclusion.

§ 73. Those of the Presbyterian denomination in the American states having, many of them, emigrated from Scotland, still profess adherence to the subordinate standards of the church there, as conformable to the word of God. Their connexion with the church of Scotland, which, while she retained her purity, was highly advantageous, became, in her declining state, an occasion of their defection. In fact, the same laxness with regard to church communion prevailing in this country, as on the other side of the Atlantic, a faithful testimony against that evil was no less necessary here than there. Hence about sixty years ago, a number of christians, lamenting the latitudinarian schemes and other corruptions, that were spreading in the American churches, petitioned the associate synod in Scotland to send them some ministers to dispense gospel ordinances and to maintain a testimony for reformation principles. In consequence of this application, the synod sent two ministers, Messrs. Gellatly and Arnot, who, with ruling elders, constituted the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania. Since that time, they have increased to such a number by others who have come from Scotland, together with natives of this country who have been called to the ministry, that they now constitute the associate synod of North America. The Secession Testimony, said Rufus, who being come on a visit to Alexander, had been mentioning these facts—the Secession Testimony, as it exhibits the cause of the Reformation pure and entire, was, in my opinion, a most precious acquisition to the American states.

§ 74. *Alex.* I acknowledge, with Mr. Willison, that the Seceders appear and declare for many things valuable and excellent. But, though it should be granted, that there was some colour of reason for their secession from the established church of Scotland, it does not follow, that, when they have come to this country, they ought to set up a separate communion from ours. There is no oath of abjuration here, no patronage, no reading of the act about captain Porteous, no judicial condemnation of the Marrow.

Ruf. I am afraid, that the treatment which the Seceding ministers met with, as soon as they came into this country, gave them too much reason to set up a separate communion. When two of these ministers arrived in the year 1754, one of our judicatories, the presbytery of Newcastle, published a Warning and Appendix, charging the Seceders with teaching erroneous doctrine concerning the gospel offer, the nature of faith, and the obligation of the religious covenants of our ancestors upon posterity; declaring their secession from the established church of Scotland to be schismatical; and representing them as seceders from the Presbyterian church in this land, as well as from the church of Scotland. Our fathers of that presbytery, in their Warning, referred to, and approved, a publication of a Mr. Delap, in Ireland; which was a sort of apology for the public evils which the associate presbytery had solemnly acknowledged to be causes of God's wrath against the church and nations of Great Britain and Ireland, as either no evils, or matters of doubtful disputation among wise and good men. Thus, our fathers of Newcastle presbytery, by their Warning, espoused the cause of the established church of Scotland, and justified the judicatories of that church, in condemning and deposing the Seceding ministers. Nor have any of our presbyteries, synods or assemblies, since that time, retracted the unfounded accusations of that Warning, nor given any public intimation of their being otherwise minded, than the presbytery of Newcastle was in 1754. So that it would be as proper to ask, why we separate from them, as why they separate from us.

Alex. By your leave, Rufus, I think there is a great difference. It is well known, that we are willing to receive them into our communion without finding fault with their principles; and we attend on their public administrations occasionally. But they will not admit us to their communion, unless we subscribe to all their punctilios.

Ruf. Well, Sir, supposing, that we give them this reason why we separate from them, and do not join their communion, that they require our assent to unnecessary punctilios. They will call upon us to prove that any of these doctrines or duties, to which they require our assent, are such punctilios. Alas! we have no proof: for the points which we have been accustomed to consider in that light, are, on inquiry, found in the word of God; and are either mentioned or necessarily implied in the confession, catechisms, directory for public worship, or the form of church government, which were agreed on by the Westminster assembly; which we have not yet renounced. It is vain for us to say, that in respect of number, the Seceders are but an handful compared with us. This will only expose us to the charge of vain glory. It was once the boast of the Jews and Heathens against the Christians; and afterwards, of the Papists against the Protestants. It might be of use when persecution was the order of the day; but will not avail us with those who allow nothing to determine controversies in matters of religion, but the scriptures of truth. Sometimes it is given as a reason for not joining with the Seceders, that they have a great deal of spiritual pride; that they value themselves upon their profession, and yet seem to be dead and formal in religious exercises; and that their practice is not answerable

to their profession. But though there may be much truth in these charges; and the Seceders often acknowledge the prevalence of such evils among themselves; particularly, in their presbyterial and synodical acts for fasts. Yet, while these evils are neither countenanced by the doctrine, professed by the associate church, nor tolerated in the exercise of her discipline, so far as any instances of such evils come under the cognizance of her courts, they cannot warrant our declining their sacramental communion. To make spiritual pride in the heart, or the want of the lively heart-exercise of grace, the ground of our declining the communion of any church of Christ, is to run into the error of the Brownists and other sectaries, who hold that the sins of one communicant pollutes the Lord's supper to other partakers: an opinion which implies much spiritual pride, and leads to a presumptuous judging of the hearts and states of others. In the mean time, I must acknowledge, that as nothing can be more opposite to spiritual pride, and also lukewarmness, in the performance of religious duties, than the profession of the Seceders; so I have not observed that they are more addicted than others to vain boasting of their own righteousness or personal attainments; or that they are in general less attentive than others to the ordinary duties of religion. But the most common answer of our people to the question, Why they refuse to join the Seceders, is, That they apprehend, there is little difference between us and them; or that they are bigots; meaning, by bigots, such as are obstinately attached to small or insignificant matters. But if they be asked, What these matters are, to which the Seceders are so unreasonably attached? they either cannot specify any thing, or, if they mention any thing, they soon discover, upon farther inquiry, that it has never been their concern, to examine whether it is agreeable to the word of God, or not.

With regard to the reasons why the Seceders do not join with us in church communion, the first that they offer, is, that we have taken a decided part with the established church of Scotland, and have made ourselves partakers of the guilt of her manifold corruptions, by rejecting and opposing a faithful testimony against them; a testimony, in adhering to which, they believe, a necessary stand is made for various truths revealed and duties enjoined in God's word.

Alex. I am persuaded, that they must renounce that testimony of theirs, now mentioned, before they can expect any great prosperity as a church, or that the Lord will visit them with any remarkable outpouring of his Spirit.*

Ruf. Why should they renounce their testimony? Its doctrine is no other than that which is taught in the Westminster assembly's confession of faith, the larger and shorter catechisms, and the form of church government. With regard to the facts which it states, we have found them established by the most authentic records and histories of Great Britain; and Mr. Willison's charges of falsehood and calumny altogether unfounded. But your assertion leads me to observe, that if it express the mind of our brethren in general, then, the Seceders must be perfectly right in concluding, that we prefer the

* Letters addressed to certain members of the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania, by a Presbyterian, page 58.

cause of the established church of Scotland to theirs; and that we deny the corruptions of that church to be such as will warrant their secession. This is expressed in the Warning of the Newcastle presbytery: nor has it been disapproved by any of our judicatories. So that, even on this ground, I cannot help thinking, that they who believe the Secession Testimony to be a faithful exhibition of the cause of God and truth, would act inconsistently, if they did not decline our communion, as well as that of the established church of Scotland. Your saying, that the Seceders must renounce their testimony, before they can expect any remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit, implies, that you do not consider the public evils, against which that testimony is exhibited, as real evils, or such as ought to be testified against: for, if they were so, testifying against them would be a scriptural duty; and the endeavour of Seceders to discharge such a duty, ought not to hinder them from expecting a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit. While such is our declared opinion concerning the testimony of the Seceders, it is no wonder, that they consider us as taking part with the established church; and allege our attachment to her cause, as one reason, why they refuse to join in our church communion. They also specify various evils, which, while persisted in and justified, contribute to keep them out of our communion.

§ 75. *Alex.* You may expect to see a phenix sooner than a church without evils.

Ruf. But they say, that the evils which hinder them from joining in our communion, are of a particular description: 1st, They are expressly authorised by our judicatories. Or, 2ndly, They are commonly and publicly practised by persons in our communion, without censure, or any faithful testimony given by our judicatories against them. Or, 3dly, They are erroneous tenets, propagated by the press or pulpit, by some in our communion, without being censured by our judicatories.

Evils of such a description, are not to be confounded with personal blemishes in the conduct of church members, or with transient acts of mal-administration not persisted in by the judicatories, or with difference of sentiments among church members on some points that have never been determined by any of her acts or constitutions. There are several things, against which the Seceders bear testimony, as evils of one or other of the sorts now mentioned: such as, 1st, Occasional communion with Independents, Baptists, or Methodists. 2ndly, Erroneous doctrine propagated by ministers in our communion without any judicial censure. 3dly, Our new Psalmody. 4thly, Our private baptism. 5thly, Our public worship in vacant congregations. 6thly, The practice of swearing by kissing a book. 7thly, Public lotteries for collecting money. 8thly, Taking the Mason oath. I am apprehensive, that on the principles exhibited, agreeably to the scriptures in the Westminster confession, catechisms, form of church government and directory for worship, we cannot defend our refusal of the reform, which the Seceders desire, in these particulars.

§ 76. *Alex.* I allow, that each of them deserves our serious consideration.

Ruf. With regard to the first, the Seceders think, that occasional communion with Independents, Methodists and Baptists, is contrary to the duty of adhering to presbyterial church government, as the only form authorised by Christ in his church; that such laxness in church communion tends to harden the people of these denominations in their errors and disorders; that this practice cannot be reconciled to the duty of not suffering sin upon our brother, without rebuking him; nor to the duty of keeping pure and entire all the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed in his word; nor to the duty of walking according to what we, as Presbyterians, professing adherence to the scriptural plan of reformation agreed on by the Westminster assembly, have attained. For such reasons as these, the Seceders intreat us by all the regard that we have for the honour of Christ and the interest of his church, (both which, they believe, are deeply concerned in this matter,) that we would renounce this occasional communion, or coalition with the open opposers of Christ's truth.

Alex. I condemn this scheme of church communion as much as you. How can two walk together, unless they are agreed? Although, I believe, there are gracious persons among the Episcopalians, Methodists and Baptists; and I long for the day, when all shall see eye to eye in Divine things; yet I do not think that holding communion with them is the way to effect that desirable end. I think, I may venture to say, that this is the prevailing sentiment on this point.*

Ruf. With regard to occasional communion, it is much the same with the catholic communion, the pleas for which were considered in our former conversations. It is unnecessary to repeat what was then advanced. But I beg leave to take notice of two things. The first is, that mentioning the parties, whose communion you decline, you omit the Independents or Congregationalists; though, I suppose, you disapprove their opinions, such as, that the churches mentioned in the New Testament were only congregational; each of them consisting of such a number as did, or could, all meet in one place, for the exercises of religious worship; that the exercise of government and discipline of the church belongs to the members of the church in common, while the ministers and elders have no other power or authority, than that of a president or moderator, to collect the votes of the people; that there is no representative church; and that ministers and elders assembled have no other authority over any congregation, than that of proposing advice, which has no authority till it be sanctioned by the votes of the congregation. Now it is evident that, according to the Westminster assembly, the presbyterial form of church government is as truly a part of our holy religion contained in the scriptures, as any other article of it; and that Independency is opposite to that form of government, as well as Episcopacy. Hence it appears, that we ought to not walk together in church fellowship with the Independents, more than with Episcopalians; since, in relation to the form of church government instituted by Christ, we are not agreed either with the one, or with the other. We have reason to believe, that there are many gracious persons among the Independents, and we are to pray earnestly, that God may bring them to

* Letters addressed, &c. pages 22, 23.

the acknowledging of the truth in this respect. But as you justly observe concerning some other sects, holding church communion with them is not the way to effect that desirable end.

The other thing I take notice of, is, that you speak with much uncertainty as to the opinion that prevails in our church, concerning occasional communion. You speak of *the prevailing sentiment*, without saying among whom it prevails.

Alex. I thought it might easily be understood, that I meant, among the ministers and other members of our church.

Ruf. Admitting this explanation, you venture on the assertion with hesitation—Nay, you only pretend to think you may venture on it. After all, I am afraid you have ventured farther than is consistent with fact. We have church communion with the Independents or Congregationalists belonging to the general association of Connecticut. In the year 1802, six Presbyterian ministers entered into an agreement at Bedford court-house, in Virginia, with a number of Baptist and Methodist preachers, to hold ministerial and sacramental communion together.*

Some of our brethren in the ministry have not scrupled to avow their approbation of this latitudinarian scheme of communion. Mr. Patillo, in his sermons and tracts, recommended by Dr. Smith, declares his readiness to admit to the Lord's table a Methodist preacher with his people, without requiring of them any recantation of their erroneous opinions. Dr. M'Corkle, in his sermon on the duty of sacrificing, lays down a scheme of church communion, which would comprehend such as deny the equality of the three persons of the Godhead, justification through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, the invincible efficacy of the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and many other articles of scripture doctrine, which are not to be found in his list of terms of communion. While such facts as these are still occurring, I do not understand how any of us can safely represent it as the prevailing sentiment of ministers and others of our communion, that it is unwarrantable for us to have sacramental communion occasionally with Episcopalians, Methodists or Baptists. Besides, what evidence does our church give, that this is her prevailing sentiment? Has our general assembly or any of our synods given a judicial declaration of the sinfulness of such occasional communion, or a judicial warning against the practice of it?

Alex. The preciseness of the Seceders, on this head, makes many censure them as uncharitable in their judgement concerning christians of other denominations.

Ruf. Their judicial declaration, which I shall now read to you, is sufficient to clear them of this aspersion. "We regard," say they, "all those as true christians, who trust in the Lord Jesus alone for "salvation, as he is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanc-"tification and redemption; and who manifest the truth of their faith "by a conversation becoming the gospel. In refusing to enter into "church fellowship with such of them as hold principles we cannot "approve, or oppose what we believe to be duty, we cannot see that "we act uncharitably towards them. An opposite conduct would "confirm them in what is wrong, and hurt us; seeing, in the present

* Surprizing Accounts of the Revival of Religion in the United States, page 36.

"state of things, it would be considered as an evidence that we were "gone into the prevailing indifference of the age, esteeming all these "truths which are subjects of controversy among christians, circum-"stantial or small matters, not worth contending for; an opinion, "which we judge contrary to the word of God and exceedingly per-"nicious to his church. To do any thing which implies a disregard to "the truth, is not the way to bring others to a proper acknowledgment "of it. To give countenance to corruptions is not the way to remove "them."

§ 77. *Alex.* Let us now proceed to the second charge, which, you say, the Seceders bring against our church, viz. that of false doctrine propagated without censure by the press or pulpit; but I see not how they can support it.

Ruf. One thing is obvious, that those of our communion, who have written against them, have furnished them with too much matter of accusation on this head. Mr. Finlay and Mr. Smith, who wrote against Mr. Gellatly, maintained, that the covenants, entered into by a particular church for religion and reformation, have no direct or formal obligation upon that church or the branches of it, as continuing to subsist in succeeding generations; and, particularly, that the national covenant of Scotland; and the solemn league and covenant of the three nations have no perpetual obligation upon these nations.* They also contended against Mr. Gellatly, that a church ought to seclude from her terms of communion such articles, though known and acknowledged by her to be Divine truths, as are matter of dispute among holy and learned men, who are agreed in the great fundamentals relating to doctrine, worship, discipline and government.† These disputants also censured the act of the associate presbytery concerning the doctrine of grace, for representing the gospel as a deed of gift or a promise of Christ, directed to sinners of Adam's family as such; and for describing saving faith as a real persuasion, that Christ is ours upon the ground of that free grant or promise; a persuasion necessarily implied in the act of trusting in him for justification and all the other blessings of salvation‡. The denial of this appropriating persuasion in the nature of saving faith is considered by Seceders as a dangerous error; for, say they, if men do not take the gospel promise for the immediate ground of their dependence on Christ as their Saviour; then they will be led to seek the ground of it in something else, in something that they feel or do; whereas it is not in the nature of saving faith to have any other ground, than the word of divine faithfulness, or *thus saith the Lord.* It would be improper at present to dwell on these points, which we formerly considered. But the number of errors propagated from the press has been increased by the writers in defence of what is called the new psalmody. One of these writers teaches, "that it is an error to say, that the Spirit of Christ dictated "what we have written in the Old Testament as well as what we have "in the New to be a perpetual rule to the church on earth." Is not

* Warning of the Newcastle Presbytery with an appendix relating to the Seceders, pages 32—35.

† Ibid. page 47.

‡ See Warning of the Newcastle Presbytery; and Mr. Smith's Vindication of it.

this much the same, as if he had said, that what is taught according to 2 Tim. iii. 16, in the answer to the second question of our shorter catechism is an error?* The same writer teaches, "that the me-"dium, through which the mercy and grace of God are communicat-"ed; and how the communication thereof is consistent with the other "Divine attributes and government, appears to be the discovery of "the New Testament;" that *the Redeemer* or *God's Anointed One*, mentioned Psal. xix. 14, and lxxxiv. 9, or ADONAI THE LORD, for whose sake Daniel ix. 17, prays, *that God would cause his face to shine upon his sanctuary*, is not to be understood of Christ as Mediator; and that when Christ says to his disciples, *Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name*, he means, "that the Old Testament did "not teach the disciples or any other before Christ spake these words "to rely upon and plead with God the merits of Christ as the one only "*Mediator* between God and man; nor to ask and expect the pardon "of sin, sanctification, direction and consolation on account of Christ's "doing and suffering."† Is not this contrary to our confession of faith,‡ which teaches us, according to John viii. 56, Heb. xi. 13, that the elect "under the Old Testament had faith in the promised Messiah, "by whom they had full remission of sins and eternal salvation; and "that there are not two covenants of grace, but one and the same un-"der various administrations." This writer also teaches, "that the "whole design and use of the types of the Old Testament dispensa-"tion were for the benefit of those who were to come after, and not of "those who lived before the great Antitype made his appearance."‖ Is not this also contrary to our confession, which declares, according to Heb. viii. ix. x. and other places of Scripture, "that the covenant "of grace was administered under the law not only by promises and "prophecies, but also by sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and "other types and ordinances, delivered to the people of the Jews; all "four signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient "and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to build up the "elect in faith on the promised Messiah."—Another zealous advocate for the new psalmody teaches, that, in consequence of the sufferings and exaltation of Christ, he is entitled to a distinct worship never before paid him: that, according to a passage which he quotes with high approbation from bishop Sherlock, in these words: "as the adoration "paid to God the Father is founded upon his being the Creator of all "things; so the worship paid to Christ, is founded in this, that he was "slain, and did by his blood redeem us; and that, when he purchased "mankind at the price of his own blood, and they became his by the "strictest bonds of justice and gratitude; there arose a new relation "between the Redeemer and the redeemed."§ But it cannot be proved, that the worship paid to Christ, in consequence of his sufferings and exaltation, was any new sort of worship, or that it had any other

* Mr. Black's Examination of a Discourse on Psalmody, page 7.

† Ibid. pages 78, 79, 80—82, 83.

‡ Chap. vii. sect. 5 and 6.

‖ Ibid. page 93.

§ Mr. Lato's Discourse on Psalmody, pages 71, 72.

foundation, than what it had under the Old Testament; even his having the same Godhead, the same absolute independence, necessary existence and infinite perfection with the Father. Nor can it be admitted, that the relation between the Redeemer and the redeemed did not subsist under the Old Testament. Job acknowledged this relation in his own case, when he said, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.* It is true, that the motives to the worship of Christ, arising from his sufferings and exaltation, are now under the New Testament dispensation set in a clearer light; but these motives cannot be said to be new in this sense, as if they had been totally unknown under the Old Testament; for they were revealed in the first promise that was given to fallen man, and were afterwards made more and more manifest to the church. In fine, is not the doctrine of Mr. Lata on this point evidently inconsistent with that of our confession of faith, which teaches us, "that, although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by "Christ, till his incarnation; yet the virtue, efficacy and benefits of it "were communicated to the elect in all ages, successively from the "beginning of the world, in and by these promises, types and sacrifi-"ces, wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed of the wo-"man who should bruise the serpent's head, and the Lamb slain from "the foundation of the world, being yesterday and to-day the same "and for ever."* "Religious worship is to be given to God the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to him alone:—And since the fall "not without a Mediator."†

Alex. The authors of a publication entitled, *Evils of the Work*,‡ represent some of our ministers as teaching errors; but they mention only two, Mr. Patillo and Dr. M'Corkle.

Ruf. Several gross errors have been pointed out in Mr. Patillo's sermons and tracts, such as, that there are some in heaven employed in teaching infants and pious Pagans upon their arrival there; that the human soul of Christ existed from the beginning of the world; that it was possible for him, while on earth to have been guilty of sin; that it is doubtful, whether it is good divinity, to call Christ the eternal Son of God in any other sense, than as his soul existed prior to all creatures; and that the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son was not from all eternity. With regard to Dr. M'Corkle,

* Confess. chap. viii. § 6. † Chap. xxi. § 2.

‡ The occasion of this publication was a remarkable work, which, about the beginning of this century, prevailed for some years in the United States under the name of a revival of religion. The subjects of it were distinguished by such bodily agitations and convulsive spasms, as those formerly mentioned with which many in Scotland were seized under the ministrations of Mr. Whitefield and some other ministers in the years 1741 and 1742. The purport of the publication, now mentioned, was a warning against evils which, there was reason to believe, attended this work. In this warning, no asperity of language was used; and no other account was given of the work, than what was taken from the letters and other communications of its friends and advocates. An anonymous answer in some letters, addressed to the ministers who concurred in this warning, appeared soon after. These letters were written in the style of bitter invective. The ministers, however, who were so treated, have no reason to regret this publication; which, notwithstanding its defects, was an honest endeavour to give people seasonable warning against the dangerous error of thinking themselves subjects of the saving work of the Holy Spirit on account of uncommon bodily agitations, on account of imaginary ideas of the object of our faith and worship, or on account of joys or sorrows which are merely the effect of these ideas. It was also a warning against ascribing to that blessed work any corruption in the communion of the church, or any disorders in the exercises of her public worship.

he shews, by his list of terms of communion, that, in his opinion, there are very few articles of the Westminster confession of faith, that ought to be considered in that light. He says, there is one article of that confession, which, on investigation, he cannot subscribe; which is, that the light of nature is not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will, which is necessary to salvation. He declares, that he sees a few, and only a few, more difficulties on the Arminian side, than on the Calvinistic; and he is not positive, that this preponderance has not arisen from early education; and therefore, it is a doubtful matter with him, whether he has any real ground to prefer the Calvinistic system to that of the Westminster divines, or not.*

Alex. I have good authority for saying, that these two ministers have been censured by the judicatures to which they respectively belong, and that they recanted their errors.†

Ruf. I wish you would say what that authority is, or at what time and place they were censured. I shall read the following passage of a performance of the Rev. James Rogers, of the associate reformed presbytery of the Carolinas and Georgia, published in the year 1796, about two years after Dr. M'Corkle's sermon on the doctrine and duty of sacrificing was printed. "I might have pointed out," says he, "several defections from the truth, which individuals belonging "to the synod of the Carolinas have been, and are guilty of;—yet, as "far as I can learn, they never censured, or even discountenanced "them in their preaching and publishing their erroneous opinions. "Have they ever censured the Rev. Samuel M'Corkle, for attempt-"ing to vilify creeds and confessions; and yet making a creed of his "own, which opens a door for Arians, Socinians, Arminians, Univer-"salists, &c. to join in communion with him? Have they discounte-"nanced the Rev. H. Balch, in preaching and publishing a sermon "vilifying the book of Psalms, and confounding the ordinances of "prayer and praise? No; instead of these gentlemen, and others "of the same stamp with them, being brought to the bar of the synod, "and dealt with as men of corrupt minds, endeavouring to sow tares "instead of wheat, the synod have, (almost every member of it,) been "assiduous to spread their publications, and cast a cloak over their "deformities."‡

From this quotation, it appears rather improbable, that Dr. M'Corkle was censured before Mr. Rogers published his performance: nor do I know, that he has ever been called to account for any of his tenets since that time.

As to the case of Mr. Patillo, I own, I am ignorant. But if we reckon his opinions to be dangerous, they ought to be expressly condemned by our judicatures; and, if he has been censured by any presbytery or synod, their procedure in that matter, and his recantation, ought to be published; in order that the satisfaction may extend as far as the offence. It would be for Mr. Patillo's honour, and ours

* See his Sermon on the doctrine and duty of Sacrificing, and an Appendix, printed in 1794.

† Letters addressed, &c. page 37.

‡ Vindication of some important Truths, pages 35, 36.

too, that his acknowledgment of the errors just now mentioned, should be as well known, as the errors themselves.

Alex. That these two solitary instances of unsoundness in the faith are all that ever could be brought forward against the ministers of the Presbyterian church, is to me an evidence, that it is, for its members, the soundest church in the world.*

Ruf. I am afraid, that it is a rash assertion, that no other ministers of our communion than these two, have ever been charged with unsoundness in doctrine by Seceders. They complained, before any of these two appeared, that the terms of our communion were loose, and calculated to tolerate the erroneous. They, who in their public teaching wrong the truth, are unsound ministers. "But," says Mr. Gellatly, "it is evident from the Warning and Appendix of the "presbytery of Newcastle, that they have wronged the truth." In the passage just now recited, from a publication of Mr. Rogers, he speaks of others belonging to the synod of the Carolinas, besides Dr. M'Corkle, who are chargeable with defection from the truth. I cannot say, that I am so particularly acquainted with the present state of all the churches in the world, as to know how many of them would allow such gross errors to be openly propagated by their ministers. But I am persuaded, that whatever instances of this sort are found in any of the reformed churches, they are contrary to their first constitutions and confessions of faith. No such doctrine could have been preached or published by a minister of the church of Scotland, without censure, in the period of the first reformation, between the years 1560 and 1596; or in the period of the second reformation, between the years 1638 and 1649. Degenerate as the times are, I hope, that this is still the case in some particular churches. But though there were in the churches a general relaxation of discipline and defection from truth, our sin, in neglecting to use the authority with which Christ hath intrusted his servants, for purging out error and corruption, would not be thereby excused, or even extenuated: for, at such a time especially, ministers and others, who desire to be found faithful, ought to appear on the Lord's side. At such a time, a particular church ought to study to obtain the commendation given to the church in Philadelphia; that she *kept the word of Christ's patience.* When the enemy cometh in like a flood; then the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him, in the faithful testimony which he will enable his servants to maintain against the evils that are breaking in. Farther, we ought to beware of thinking the evil of two ministers teaching error, without censure, a small matter. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. The contagion of error usually makes rapid progress. The apostle says concerning the Galatians, I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel.

Alex. The gentlemen's mentioning these two ministers, in the pamphlet concerning the revival of religion, can be imputed to no other cause, than a desire to blacken the character, and sully the glory of the Presbyterian church.†

Ruf. What the secret desire or motive of these persons was, it belongs to God, not to us, to judge:—But I am sure, that when our

* Letters addressed, &c. page 32. † Ibid. page 33.

Lord Jesus pointed out the errors of the public teachers of the Jewish church; and when Paul declared the doctrine of some teachers, (whether they were two or more,) in the church of Galatia to be contrary to the gospel of Christ, our Saviour and his servant Paul meant no harm to these churches, but good. In the present case, it was not impossible, that the authors of the pamphlet in question, might have no thought or desire of blackening the character or sullying the glory of the Presbyterian church, when they mentioned some errors taught by these ministers. They might intend no more than what they have expressed: that is, to shew, that the work called a revival did not effect a reformation in the public state of our church; to which reformation belongs the censuring of erroneous teachers; and also, a particular condemnation of their errors; and a plain assertion of the truth, in opposition to them. Nor is there any probability, that we shall be brought to such a reformation by revivals that are begun and carried on according to the same principles, on which the revivals under Mr. Whitefield's administrations proceeded. If these gentlemen had said in general, that we ought to purge out erroneous teachers from our communion; we would have been apt to say, that they could not point out any such teachers in our communion; and that they were confounding the innocent with the guilty. But, in specifying two erroneous teachers amongst us, they have dealt plainly and faithfully with us. It is unreasonable, as well as uncharitable to suppose, that they seek to sully the glory of the Presbyterian church in the United States; while they consider themselves as belonging to the Presbyterian church in these states.

Alex. Dr. M'Corkle's terms of communion are not so bad as the tremendous oath, which is made the term of communion by the associate presbytery.*

Ruf. It is but a mean artifice of some, unworthy of our imitation, to continue to give ill names to persons or things, when they have nothing of consequence, but the ill names to allege against them. When we were considering this oath or bond of the associate presbytery, we could not find, that it is an engagement to testify against any thing, but what is manifestly sinful; or to contend for any thing, but what is evidently a truth revealed, or a duty enjoined in the word of God. As to the facts referred to in the bond, it is, as was observed, grossly absurd to suppose, that those who enter into it swear to the truth of them: for that is supposed to be sufficiently ascertained by other human testimony. And we found, that in other duties, as well as in this, we proceed, and ought to do so, upon human testimony. We have also seen, in what sense the associate presbytery made joining in the bond the term of communion. There is, however, a great difference, or rather a diametrical opposition, between their term and Dr. M'Corkle's terms. His terms are for introducing a profane syncretism, or communion with Socinians, Universalists, and other gross heretics:—Whereas, the term of the associate presbytery is an engagement to contend and testify against all such unscriptural communion. Dr. M'Corkle's terms are for laying aside all concern to hold fast the profession of the faith—the term exhibited by the associate presbytery is for promoting that concern. Dr. M'Corkle's terms

* Letters addressed, &c. page 33.

lead men to take up with mere sounds and syllables, without any regard to the true import of the language of scripture. Thus, one of his terms of communion is, That there is a Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now, these are mere sounds, without any meaning; while he does not determine, as the scripture and the associate presbytery do, whether the Son be God, equal with the Father; whether he be the Son of God by an eternal and incomprehensible generation; and whether the Holy Spirit be the Most High God, or a created Spirit, or no person at all, or only an attribute or quality, or an operation. We might go through the most of his terms in the same manner. In a word, Dr. M'Corkle's terms are a desertion of the whole reformation cause, which, as Protestants and Presbyterians, we profess to be clearly founded on the scriptures:—Whereas, the term of the associate presbytery is nothing more or less than an honest and faithful adherence to the whole of that cause.

After all, the Doctor pleads in his own defence,* that his view of the terms of communion is entirely agreeable to two propositions contained in a pastoral letter, proposed by a committee of the synod of the Carolinas, which the whole synod approved, and directed to all the churches under their care. The propositions are, "1st, That no "one thing be proposed as a term of communion, unless, in doctrine, "it be essential," [as he understands it, to the very existence of the christian religion:] "and, in practice, contrary to some express com-"mand. 2nd, That they, who shall at last commune together for-"ever in heaven, may very justly hold communion with each other "on earth."—After quoting these propositions from the pastoral letter, the Doctor adds; "I have only attempted to mark these doc-"trines that are essential, and to distinguish them from those that "are not so."—Now it is not at all probable, that the synod would censure Dr. M'Corkle for pursuing the plan, which they themselves had laid down in their pastoral letter. Indeed that synod appears, from the passages of the letter now quoted, to be deeply infected with the leaven of his lax principles. From such instances as these now adduced, the Seceders have some reason to say; We have no sufficient evidence of the orthodoxy of these ministers as a body, while many of them openly avow their adherence to such erroneous tenets, as have now been mentioned; and therefore, we decline attending on their public administrations.†

§ 78. *Alex.* We have dwelt long enough on Dr. M'Corkle's opinions. Let us now proceed to the consideration of the third article complained of by Seceders, which is, our singing hymns of human composure in public worship. Why do the Seceders make such a noise

* See the Preface to his Sermon on Sacrificing.

† It adds much to the grievance of Seceders on the head of erroneous doctrine taught in the communion of the general assembly of the United States, That the scheme of errors called Hopkinsianism has not been judicially condemned by that body, nor any judicially censured for teaching such errors as these; That God causes sin by a positive efficiency; that the guilt of Adam's first sin is not imputed to his posterity; that there is, strictly speaking, no other sin but actual sin. That the vicarious atonement of Christ is of such a nature, that the sinner might lawfully be punished after the sufferings of his Substitute; that there is no other imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers, than their enjoyment of the fruits of it; that sinners are as really able to repent and believe before regeneration as after it. For a particular account of the Hopkinsian opinions, the reader is referred to Ely's Contrast.

about our singing such compositions as contain nothing but scripture truth, and tend to animate our devotion.

Ruf. It is easy to state their objections to our practice on this head. 1st, They judge, that by this practice, we disregard the authority of God in appointing the Psalms given by the inspiration of his Spirit to be sung in the solemn worship of his church. By the Psalms, they mean those parts of the scriptures bearing the titles of Psalms or Songs; particularly, the book of Psalms. These, the Seceders believe, God appointed to be sung in the solemn worship of his church. Hezekiah and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises to God in the words of David and of Asaph the seer.* With regard to the authority by which all the regulations concerning the singing of the Levites were established, we are informed, that it was *the commandment of the Lord by his prophets* † These songs were delivered by the inspired writers to be sung in the public worship of the church, according to 1 Chron. xvi. 7, and according to the inscriptions of the Psalms.

The authority of the Old Testament, (which the Seceders, agreeably to our confession of faith, consider as the same with that of the New,) binds us to continue in the practice of singing the Psalms given by Divine inspiration; as being a practice which has never been abrogated. They are much confirmed in this belief by observing, that the multitude and variety of the scripture songs are such, that the people of God, in all the changes of their condition, have never been at any loss to find some part of these songs exactly adapted to their case, giving them lively impressions of the omniscience and goodness of the Divine Author, in foreseeing each of their cases, and furnishing them with such suitable words of reproof, instruction and consolation. It is true, there are many truths more fully stated and declared in other parts of scripture, than in the Psalms; but these truths are implied, or supposed and proceeded upon in the Psalms; which the Seceders regard as comprizing a system of songs and hymns sufficient to answer all the purposes of singing in the solemn and public worship of the church.

2ndly, The Seceders urge, that the singing of human compositions in the solemn and public worship of the church, is not warranted by any precept or example to be found in the word of God. Hence, they consider those who adhere to this practice, as chargeable with mixing something of human invention with the instituted worship of God. They regard our singing these hymns of human composure, instead of the inspired Psalms, in the same light with Jeroboam's observation of the feast of tabernacles on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, instead of the fifteenth day of the seventh month; the month in which God had appointed it to be observed. In short, they declare, they cannot help looking upon this practice as a superstitious innovation in the worship of the Presbyterian church, and as one of the causes of God's wrath against this generation.

3dly, The Seceders complain, that their grievance on this head has been nothing lessened, but rather increased, by the manner in which the singing of these human composures in public worship has been defended. The advocates for this practice, have advanced such

* 2 Chron. xxix. 30. † Verse 25.

opinions, in defending it, on the defects of the Psalms, and of the whole scriptures of the Old Testament, on the difference between the worship of Jesus Christ under the Old Testament, and under the New; on the warrantableness of instrumental music in New Testament worship, and on other subjects; as appear to be inconsistent with the doctrine taught, according to the holy scriptures, in the Westminster confession of faith and catechisms. The Psalms, which the Holy Spirit indited to promote our devotion, have been represented as damping it; and the words and forms of the Psalms, when translated, have been denied to be any more the word of God, than the words and forms of the hymns of human composure; and that it is not necessary, in translating the scriptures, to preserve the phraseology of the original. The opinion, that some have expressed in defending our new psalmody, namely, that the words of scripture, even when literally and justly translated, are no more the words of the Holy Spirit than English is Hebrew or Greek, has been shewn, I think, to be a Deistical opinion.*

Alex. In the heat of controversy, even sensible men are sometimes carried into extremes. But we have a sufficient warrant for singing in solemn worship such hymns as we ourselves compose, as well as those we find in the book of Psalms, in Col. iii. 16, where the apostle exhorts us to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The Seceders, from an obstinate attachment to their favourite opinion, dislike this text, as much as the Arians do the 7th verse of the fifth chapter of the 1st epistle of John. The book of Psalms never obtained these various titles, nor was known by them; but, on the contrary, the name of Psalms was appropriated to it. The apostle, by these various names of such different derivation, did not mean that book exclusive of all others, nor indeed any one collection of compositions then extant.

Ruf. We should not say, that the Psalms never obtained these various titles; nor were known by them; since the words psalms, hymns, and songs are an exact translation of the Hebrew titles of the Psalms;† since the Greek words, so rendered, are all found in the titles of the Psalms in the Septuagint translation of this book. When Josephus speaks of David's hymns and songs, I suppose every reader understands him as speaking of the Psalms. Indeed, I think it cannot be denied, that there are hymns and spiritual songs in the book of Psalms: and if so, it follows, that we do what the apostle exhorts us to do; that is, we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, when we sing the compositions contained in that book.

Alex. But can it be proved, that these are meant exclusively, or that we should sing no other in public and solemn worship?

Ruf. This part of the holy scriptures is called by Christ and his apostles *biblos psalmon*, the book of Psalms. From their use of this title we conclude, that the Psalms, not only considered separately, but as forming a collection or system, are of Divine authority. We have indeed other songs in scripture, such as, those of Hezekiah and Habakkuk.‡ Hezekiah concludes his song with these words: *The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed in-*

* See Vindiciæ Cantus Dominici, or a Vindication of Scripture Psalmody. Pages 98—113, 248, 249.

† *Mitsmarim, Tehillim, Shirim.* ‡ Isaiah xxxviii. Habakkuk iii.

struments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord. Hezekiah here expresses his resolution to employ the remainder of his days in celebrating the praises of his Divine Deliverer; but does not say, that his preceding meditation, as here recorded, was to be sung, like the songs in the book of Psalms, in the ordinary public worship of the temple. If this writing of Hezekiah had been designed for that purpose, it would probably have been placed, (as Vitringa on this passage says, he believes, was the case with other songs of Hezekiah*) in that book. This song was not necessary, on account of the subject of it, as a supplement to the book of Psalms, as there are several in that book, such as the 38th, the 39th and 90th, on the same subject. So there are several psalms concerning the same illustrious events that are described in the song of Habakkuk, such as the 68th and the 76th. With regard to the words in this song, which are rendered in our translation, *To the chief musician on my stringed instrument*, it may be observed, that while the word *neginoth* is found in the inscription of the 4th, 6th, 54th, 67th and 76th psalms; but in none of them has it, as here, the pronominal affix rendered *my;* a circumstance which leads us to consider the word *neginoth*, as respecting the personal exercise of the prophet, rather than the joint exercise of the singers in the temple. But though it had been the case, that these and other parts of scripture, bearing the title of songs, were sometimes warrantably sung in solemn and public worship of the church; yet it would not follow, that we may warrantably sing in that worship portions of scripture which bear no such title; and far less does it follow, that we may sing in that worship songs or hymns, which, as such, cannot at all be pretended to be given by Divine inspiration. As it was the prerogative of Jehovah to add to the canon of scripture; so it was his prerogative to add, if it had been necessary, to the system of psalms, which he had given by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit to be sung in the public and solemn worship of his church. But this only serves to shew the impious presumption of men's attempts to add to that system.

I can easily see the reason why the Arians abhor the text, you cited, in the first epistle of John, because it expressly asserts, (what these heretics deny) that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are one in respect of their Divine essence or being. But to affirm, that the Seceders as much dislike the other passage you cited in the third chapter of the epistle to the Colossians,† because they are against the making of hymns by persons that are uninspired for the purpose of being sung in solemn and public worship, and against the use of them according to such a purpose, is quite unreasonable; while there is nothing in the passage now referred to about hymns or songs of that particular description. If it had been either expressed or necessarily implied in this text, that the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs used in solemn or formal worship were to be of human composure, it would have been formidable to the tenet of the Seceders; but as it is, I think, we must yield the cause to them, unless we can produce some other text, which is more to the purpose.

* Non est mihi dubium quin extent ejus compositionis aliqua in odis Davidicis.

† Letters addressed, &c. page 38.

Alex. At present, I would rather decline entering largely into the merits of the cause. The contest has been triumphantly managed by the reverend and venerable Messrs. Black and Lata.* But it seems absurd to say, that we may not use such songs in our solemn worship, as express our praises of God for the incarnation, obedience, atonement, and resurrection of the Divine Mediator, as events which have already taken place.

Ruf. It is true, we cannot, in this conversation, enter largely into the merits of every particular that comes under our review. What we assign, however, as a reason for our adherence to any side of a question ought to be something that appears satisfactory. But to say that such a cause has been triumphantly managed by two of our ministers, you can hardly suppose will satisfy my mind, especially, when that which has been advanced against them, on the part of the Seceders, remains, to this day, unanswered. With regard to the remark you added, I observe, that the faith of God's people, even under the Old Testament, always rested upon Christ's obedience and atonement, as if they had been already finished; and, as if God's acceptance of them had been already manifested in his resurrection and ascension. Hence these events are celebrated in the Psalms, as if they had been past events. *They pierced my hands and my feet: they gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Thou hast ascended on high: thou hast led captivity captive. The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.* Dare we say, that in singing these and the like expressions the people of God do not sing praises to him for Jesus Christ as already crucified and exalted? Dare we deny, that the Holy Spirit, in giving these expressions to be sung in solemn worship, intended that they should be used and applied in praising God for Christ's finished work? On the other hand, if it was the design of the Holy Spirit, that they should be so used and applied, is there no impiety in teaching, that these parts of the Psalms are not well adapted by the infinite wisdom of God to that end?

Alex. There is one plain simple argument, which satisfies myself with respect to the propriety of singing what the Seceders call human composures in the worship of God. It is this: If we are to use our own words in prayer and preaching, provided they are agreeable to the word of God, why not in praising also?†

Ruf. To this the Seceders have often returned a very plain answer. God hath given us a book or system of Psalms, and hath commanded us to sing them in his worship; but he has nowhere in the scriptures signified, that the duties of prayer and preaching are rightly performed by the mere repetition of a prescribed form of words. It is evident, that we cannot join together in singing the praises of God in his worship, without some prescribed form. We have in our Bible, forms of psalms or songs adapted to every occasion, on which we are called to sing his praise: the question is, which of these forms are we to prefer on such occasions? Those which God hath given by the immediate inspiration of his Holy Spirit, and which he has appointed to be sung

* Mr. Porter's Revival of Religion Delineated, a Synod Sermon. Pages 11 and 12.

† Letters addressed, &c. page 30.

in his worship; or human composures, which have no such authority? Which psalmody are we to prefer? That which is certainly from Heaven, or that which we know to be of men? Besides, if we admit this reasoning from the use of our own words in prayer to the use of them in singing, I cannot see, why we should not also admit the reasoning of the advocates for liturgies and set forms of prayer from the use of set forms in singing. There is hardly any church without some established form of psalmody. Amongst ourselves, Dr. Watts' Imitation has obtained a sort of establishment; and why, may not Episcopalians say, should we not have a common form of prayer established among us, as well as a form of psalmody? I know not how we can confute such reasoning without shewing the difference between singing and prayer in this respect; without shewing, that there is a warrantable use of a set form of words in the one, but not in the other. The words we use in prayer, whether we use the words of scripture or others, expressing sentiments or desires agreeable to the scriptures, must, from the very nature of the exercise, be considered, in their tenor or connexion, as our own words. But the words we sing are often not our words to God, but God's words to us, words of doctrine reproof, direction, or instruction: such as those of the 1st, 37th, 49th, 50th, and other Psalms. It is a pity, that any should be so uncandid as to deny such a plain truth. It is also inconsistent with candour to impute to the Seceders a superstitious attachment to what is called Rouse's Version of the Psalms. They prefer it as the most correct verse-translation in our language. They have reason for this preference from its having undergone the correction both of the Westminster assembly and of the general assembly of the church of Scotland. They disapprove the singing of Dr. Watts' Imitation in public and solemn worship, because it is not a version of the Psalms at all. It was never intended to be so by the author, as appears by his preface and the title of the work as published by himself. He accounted much of the matter and the style in general of the Psalms, as they stand in the Old Testament, unsuitable to New Testament worship; and therefore he did not mean to preserve the whole matter of the Psalms, or their style, but to express as much of the matter as he judged suitable to his purpose, not in the language of the Old Testament, that is, in their own language, but in the language of the New Testament. Hence the title of *A Version*, or *An Improved Version*, in the editions of that work lately printed, must seem to be an imposition on the public.*

Alex. It has been so common to hear disputants call one another uncandid, that the accusation is now little regarded.

Ruf. It may, however, be sometimes well grounded; as well as some of the charges of injustice which we continually hear people bring against their neighbours in their civil affairs; and is it not even more necessary to distinguish between justice and injustice in controversies about matters of religion, than in those about civil affairs?

* On the subject of psalmody the reader is referred to *Vindiciæ Cantus Dominici* mentioned in a former note, to a recent valuable publication, entitled, An Apology for the Book of Psalms, in five letters, by Gilbert M'Master, A. M. and to a sermon on the same subject, by Mr. Walker.

§ 79. *Alex.* Let us now proceed to consider private baptism, which is a fourth article in which the Seceders are seeking a reform. The authors of the pamphlet, entitled, the Evils of the Work, say, that private baptism is allowed by our form of discipline; which says, there may be cases when it is expedient to administer this ordinance in private houses. But, if this is an error, the apostles were guilty of it; as in the case of the Jailor and his household, recorded in the xvi. chap. of the Acts of the Apostles, with other instances, which I could mention. If this is the meaning of these gentlemen, concerning private baptism, the discipline of the Presbyterian church allows it—if this is not their meaning, they either betray great ignorance, or wish to slander her; for her form of discipline allows nothing more than I have mentioned.

Ruf. I think, Sir, that neither you nor I can be ignorant of what the Seceders hold with regard to private baptism. They do not say, that it is unlawful to baptise in private houses in two cases: 1st, Where there is no organized or constituted church or congregation; as appears to have been the case, where the Ethiopian Eunuch, and the Jailor with his family were baptised. 2dly, Even in a constituted church or congregation, where it is accompanied with the preaching of the word, and after a public intimation of it made to the congregation: for, I suppose you have heard, oftener than once, of a Seceding minister on the Lord's day intimating to the people of his congregation his intention of preaching and administering baptism in a private house on some following day of the week. So that the baptism which the Seceders disapprove, in private houses in the bounds of a constituted church or congregation, is that which is not accompanied with the public preaching of the word, according to an intimation, calling the people of the congregation together to attend on these ordinances. The church of Scotland discharged the administration of baptism in private; that is, in any place, or any time, when the congregation is not orderly called together, to wait on the dispensing of the word; which is agreeable, as Stewart in his Collections tells us, to the 6th article, chap. ii. of the Discipline of the French church. The Westminster assembly, in their Directory, say, that baptism is not to be administered in private places, or privately, but in the place of public worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may most conveniently see and hear. These constitutions are in direct opposition to the private baptism which the Seceders disapprove: that is, when the people are not regularly called together to hear the word preached. Whereas, it seems rather to be countenanced by the omission of the limitations just now mentioned, in the direction which our form of discipline gives about the administration of baptism in private houses. Besides, I suppose we cannot deny, that such private baptism has obtained in our communion:—As little can we say, that it has ever been considered amongst us as a ground of church censure. The Seceders hold the prohibition of private baptism to be a part of that reformation which was attained by the church of Scotland, and sworn to in solemn covenants. It was included in the condemnation of what were called the five articles of Perth. That faithful assembly, which was held at Glasgow, in the year 1638, in an act concerning these articles, tells us, that an assembly, fifty-seven years before, had

ordained, that the sacraments should not be administered in private houses; that a minister of Trament was suspended at that time, for baptising an infant in a private house; but that, confessing his offence, he was ordained to make his public confession in Trament. They mention another minister, who had become an object of censure for baptising privately.

Alex. Some divines have defended the practice of private baptism.

Ruf. It may be so. But the church of Scotland seems to have had good reasons for condemning it: such as, that it is contrary to the nature and design of the sacraments, as being public ordinances; a person's partaking of which, is a solemn and public profession of his union and communion with the whole church of Christ; that it separates preaching from baptising, which two things are joined *together* in our Lord's solemn charge to his ministers, Matth. xxviii. 19; *that* it deprives the parent and his child of the particular prayers of the congregation on their behalf; that it opens a door to a clandestine and irregular admission of persons to the communion of the church; and fosters the popish notion of the absolute necessity of baptism to the salvation of infants.

Alex. I think, the Seceders would have censured the apostles, who never scrupled to baptise any person, as soon as they found, that he believed in Jesus.

Ruf. They did so, where there was no constituted church. But we have reason to believe, that they would have censured the irregular and clandestine dispensation of baptism in constituted churches. They enjoined all things to be done decently and in order, 1 Corinth. xiv. 40. Paul rejoiced, when he saw the order of a constituted church, Colos. ii. 5.

§ 80. *Alex.* Our time does not now admit a longer discussion of this subject. Let us proceed to the fifth thing, which they sometimes mention as a ground of complaint, which is the xxi. chapter of our form of government concerning vacant congregations assembling for public worship—directing every vacant congregation to meet together on the Lord's day, at one or more places, for the purpose of prayer, singing praises, and reading the holy scriptures; together with the works of such approved divines, as the presbytery, within whose bounds they are, may recommend: and that elders or deacons be the persons who shall preside, and select the portions of scripture, and of other books to be read; and to see that the whole be conducted in an orderly manner.

Ruf. Candour obliges us to attend carefully to the sense in which they disapprove this part of our form of government. They inculcate private and domestic praying, praising, reading the word, spiritual conference, and exhorting one another, as the common duty of christians. Such private teaching, say they, is held forth in many texts; as in Colos. iii. 16, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another:* 1 Thess. v. 11, *Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do:* Heb. iii. 13, *Exhort one another daily:* Mal. iii. 16, *Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard:* Zech. viii. 21, *The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of*

hosts: I will go also. From these and other texts they teach, that it is the duty of christians to meet together in private societies for prayer and spiritual conference. But they reckon that, in a constituted state of the church, the ordinary public worship of a congregation ought to be under the administration of one, or more, invested with the office of the pastor or teacher. It is certain, that no other public worship is acknowledged by the Westminster assembly. According to their directory, the minister is both the mouth of God to a worshipping congregation, in teaching, convincing, reproving, exhorting and comforting; and also, the mouth of the congregation to God in public prayer. In the larger catechism, they say, "All "are not permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation;" meaning, that they only ought to read it publicly, whose office it is both to read the word of God, and to explain it to the edification of others, Nehem. viii. 8. It is certain, that public worship under the administration of such, as are not called by their office to dispense the word of God publicly, is a novelty in the Presbyterian church. Such public worship obtained, indeed, among some Independents, who contended, that any church members, who have gifts, may preach the word publicly and ordinarily; falsely supposing, that Christ's sending them to preach, consists in his giving them gifts for that work; though the scripture distinguishes between God's giving persons gifts and his giving them authority to exercise these gifts in the public preaching of the word. Christ gave gifts to his apostles by breathing on them, and causing them to receive the Holy Spirit: but he gave them authority, or sent them, by saying to them, *Go and baptise all nations. Gifts* are supposed as prerequisites to *sending;* but are still to be considered as distinct from it. I have read a saying of Luther, on this subject, which I think is solid: "God giveth talents, saith "he, to those who are called of him: therefore, gifted men should "attend to and accept the calling of God. It may be, the perverse-"ness of the church denies a calling to one who is gifted. Then, I "say, let him use his talent in private. God reapeth not, where he "doth not sow."

Alex. The Seceders carry this matter too far. Persons, that are not called to the ministerial office, may embrace opportunities of teaching and exhorting publicly; otherwise, the woman of Samaria was wrong, in communicating her discovery of Christ to her fellow-citizens: and Mr. James Durham, when an officer in the Scotch army, was blameable for praying with the men under his command, and for giving them many serious exhortations concerning the case of their souls: and also the martyrs, who solemnly declared, to attending multitudes, the testimony which they held, and which they were going to seal with their blood. Besides, when the people of a congregation meet to deliberate about their public affairs, I should think it very proper for the president of the meeting to begin with prayer.

Ruf. But I cannot see, how any one of these cases is an example of the practice in question. The woman of Samaria was not taking upon her to preside in the ordinary solemn worship of a constitute church or congregation, when she informed her fellow-citizens of her interview with Christ. In a constitute church, the apostle declares, that a woman is not permitted to speak publicly. Mr. Durham was

only performing a duty of christian charity towards the men under his command, which his station gave him an opportunity of performing. So the president of a meeting, for deliberating about temporal affairs, ought to act as the mouth of the assembly, in seeking the direction and blessing of God; whom we are bound to acknowledge in all our ways. This is more necessary and becoming, if the affairs under deliberation affect the welfare of a worshipping congregation. With regard to a martyr, he is in the providence of God called upon, as a witness, to bear a solemn testimony to the truth. It is evident, that not one of these things belongs peculiarly to the regular exercise of the ministerial office; as is the case with that of leading or directing the ordinary public worship on the Lord's day, in a constituted state of the church. In all the instances now adduced, the persons do nothing but what belongs to their respective stations. But, in an assembly for public worship, no man, but a sent and called minister, can properly say, that it belongs to his station to read the word of God, to pray and exhort publicly. Has any one of them, who is not a minister, a sufficient ground to say to the rest, I have a call from God, which none of you have, to officiate in public worship?

Alex. The elders and deacons have the call of the people, who have chosen them.

Ruf. But the public reading of the word and public prayer in the assemblies for public worship on the Lord's day, do not belong to the office, to which the people have chosen them. It is evident, that the Westminster assembly, in their form of church government, which they have drawn from the sacred scriptures, did not allow elders or deacons to do what, in that form of sound words, is assigned peculiarly to the office of the pastor.

§ 81. *Alex.* We should now proceed to the consideration of the other evils you mention, viz. the form of swearing by kissing a book, public lotteries, and the Mason oath. But as we have conversed on these subjects before, we need not resume the consideration of them.

Ruf. These three evils prevail as much in this country, as in Great Britain; and therefore a testimony against them here is equally necessary.

Now, sir, we have taken a survey of the several grounds of complaint, which the Seceders exhibit as grievances, which they intreat us to redress. I do not find, that on any of these particulars they are chargeable with falsehood, or even with any exaggeration. There are other public matters which they sometimes complain of and desire to have amended; such as, reading sermons instead of preaching them, the admission of many to sealing ordinances, who are known neglecters of the worship of God in their families, the neglect of the publication of the purpose of marriage a competent time before the celebration of it.

Alex. I would ask, whether these things are not disapproved either expressly or implicitly in the confession and catechisms which we have adopted: why then do the Seceders charge us with these things?

Ruf. What you say of the Westminster confession and catechisms is most readily granted; but they reckon, that our general profession of adherence to these forms of sound words is as far from proving satisfactorily, that we renounce the tenets or practices which the Sece-

ders testify against, as a similar profession made formerly by Messrs. Simson and Campbell, and more lately by Dr. M'Gill was from proving that they renounced the errors with which they were charged. How can we expect that such an apology will satisfy the Seceders; whilst the tenets and practices, which they consider as errors and corruptions, however habitually and publicly persisted in, pass without censure? You would surely reckon it very absurd for a person to offer to vindicate himself from any charge brought against him, by alleging that the Bible, which he had adopted as the rule of his faith and practice, condemned either expressly or implicitly the misdemeanor with which he was charged. If our judicatures disapprove the form of swearing by kissing a book, public as well as private lotteries, swearing the Mason oath, attending the public administrations of Methodists and other teachers of error, admitting the neglecters of family worship to sealing ordinances, why do they not declare that these offences, complained of by Seceders, are sinful; and that such as persist in the practice of them any longer, shall incur the censures of the church? Why does not the presbyterian church in the United States of America exhibit an explicit, public testimony against such evils?

Alex. She has not, as yet, deemed it proper to do so: but if the time comes, that she thinks it necessary, I hope she will testify against the evils and errors of the day.

Ruf. Your way of speaking puts me in mind of those Jews who, when the prophet Haggai was encouraging them to rebuild the temple, said, *The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.* And why is it not time to exhibit an explicit, public testimony against the evils and errors of the day? God's name is dishonoured by these evils and errors: And will not zeal for his declarative glory urge us to testify against them without delay? Souls are in danger of being insnared and ruined: and will faithful watchmen neglect at such a time to give them seasonable warning? In these evils and errors, the enemy comes in, like a flood: and shall not ministers and people, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, lift up a standard against him? Are not ministers, especially, neglecting a most important duty of their office, when they do not join together in judicially asserting and declaring the truths of God in a direct and pointed opposition to the errors that prevail?

§ 82. *Alex.* In the pamphlet to which we have so often referred, the authors insult the understanding of mankind by an eccentrick harangue about the peculiar ardour with which all sorts of persons at the reformation from Popery, embraced the testimony of the Waldenses, Lollards, Wickliffites and Bohemians; when at the same time, that testimony is so far from pleasing the Seceders, that if these men were to arise from the grave, and hold the same sentiments, which they held before their death, these gentlemen would not so far acknowledge them as christians, as to hold stated or occasional communion with them, or hear a sermon from one of their ministers. The reformers did not condemn the church of Rome, because she did not testify judicially against free masonry and lotteries.

Ruf. The passage you alluded to in the pamphlet entitled, *Evils of the Work*, simply asserts (without affecting to harangue) that they who embraced the reformation preached by Luther, Zuinglius, Calvin

and others were engaged in the same cause which had been maintained before by the Waldenses, Albigenses, Wickliffites, Hussites and others. If this assertion insults the human understanding, it has been insulted by the most judicious writers, concerning the reformation. Turretine* on this question, Where the protestant religion was before Luther and Zuinglius? observes that before these reformers, there were, according to Thuanus, Eneas Sylvius, and other historians, some who professed the same faith, and testified against the same errors of Popery, such as, the Waldenses, the Wickliffites, the Lollards. Mezeray in his abridgment of chronology, says of the Waldenses, that they had almost the same opinions which are held by those now called Calvinists. And how can we deny (what is the purport of the passage which you censure) that the revival of God's work in his church reconciles the minds of men to those truths and ordinances of Christ, against which they had before been strongly prejudiced, and to which for some time before a few only had professed adherence.

With regard to your remark, that the Seceders would not hold communion with the witnesses of Christ in former times, if they were now living and holding the same sentiments which they held before their death,—I observe, that it is much the same with the objection, which was commonly in the mouths of the Papists in the period of the reformation; namely, that the fathers of the primitive church, had they been then alive, would have had no communion with our reformers. It is true, the profession made by the church, since the canon of scripture was closed, ought to have been, in substance, one and the same. But there are two things which occasion variations in the form of the church's profession, or of the manner in which it is stated in different periods or places of the world. One is, that several articles of Divine truth are better understood and more clearly and distinctly stated in the church's profession in one period or place of the world, than in another; in this respect churches as well as individuals are capable of improvement. To be convinced of this truth, we need only compare the state of the church before the coming of Christ, with the state of it after that event; and its state before the reformation from Popery with its attainments afterwards; or the confession of the Greek church with the confessions of the reformed churches. The other thing that occasions a diversity in the statement of the church's profession, is, the diversity of the errors and corruptions which the church has to struggle with in different ages and places of the world. But notwithstanding such variety of attainments, so far as the church of Christ, in different times and places, is adhering to his truth, and opposing error, she is engaged in the same cause. Hence, the testimony of Wickliffe and the testimony of the Seceders may both be considered as the word of Christ's patience, and as faithful testimonies against the errors and corruptions of their respective times: nor can it be any sufficient objection to this harmony between him and them, that there are various articles of truth and various evils specified in their testimony, which are not specified in his; and on the contrary, many in his testimony which are not in theirs. For this diversity is no more than what necessarily arises from the progressive attainments of the church, and from the various ways in which the truth is opposed in

* Loc. 18. quæst. x. vol. iii. page 64.

different periods. The same faithfulness, which induced Wickliffe to oppose the corruptions and superstitions of his time, would have led him, had he lived in our day, to testify against the Mason oath and public lotteries.

§ 83. *Alex.* You, then, consider the testimony of those you call witnesses of Christ as the same in different periods of time. It seems, that a similar opinion about the oneness of the church of Christ and the identity of the profession which she ought to make in the most distant parts of the world, are the ground of the subordination which the Seceders acknowledge to their general synod in Scotland. The admitting, however, of references and appeals in matters of faith to that synod, in which the secession body here have no representatives, seems inconsistent with Presbyterian principles. It was a sprightly remark that was lately made upon these seceding clergymen in a sermon preached at the opening of the synod of Pittsburgh. "They frequently find their lamp so dim," said the preacher, "that they cannot see to manage the business that occurs in their own little sphere, until they send to Edinburgh for oil."

Ruf. I apprehend, that there is nothing more in the connexion between the associate synod in Scotland (as it is stated in their act concerning it) than what belongs to the scriptural unity of the church of Christ. For however many particular visible churches of Christ there may be, such as the churches of Judea, Galatia, Ephesus, Corinth, they are all considered in scripture as constituting one general visible church of Christ. The word *ecclesia*, or church, is often taken in such a large sense as to signify, not any single particular church; but one general visible church: God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. These things I write—that thou mayest know, how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.* In these passages the church of Christ, is spoken of as the general visible church, to which the oracles, the ministry, and the ordinances, including church government, are given. Since, then, there is but one general visible church, having a government set in it of Divine right; and since that government, which belongs primarily to the whole church or body of Christ, belongs secondarily to all the parts of it, it may be justly concluded, that the more extensively church government is managed in greater and more general assemblies, the more fully is the edification of the whole body of Christ, which, next to his glory, is the great end of church government, attained; and that, on the contrary, the less extensively this government is exercised, as only in presbyteries, or congregational elderships, the more imperfect it is; and the less it is calculated to answer the general end now mentioned. Hence it is manifestly agreeable to the constitution of the church of Christ, that the several particular churches should be united, as far as can be attained, under one general government. The more nearly that we approach to this plan, we approach the more nearly to the form of government delivered to the church by Christ and his apostles. According to these scriptural principles, two particular churches, however great their local distance from one another, while

* 1 Corinth. xii. 28. 1 Tim. iii. 15.

they make, as they ought to do, the same profession of the faith, should consider themselves as one professing body, one church; and for preserving this unity, they ought to submit any controversies, that may arise concerning matters of faith, to a judicature, representing the whole as fully, as their local situation admits. The general associate synod may be considered as such a judicature with regard to the associate body in Britain, Ireland and America. It may be farther observed, that, though every part of an ecclesiastical body, which is subordinate to a representative judicature, ought ordinarily to send members to it; yet it does not follow, that every remote part of the body, from which it is found impracticable to send members, ceases to be represented by, or subordinate to, such a judicature. It does not appear, that the churches to which the apostles delivered the decrees of the synod at Jerusalem (which we have an account of in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts) were only such as had sent members to that synod. We may not expect to find a synod or council in which all parts of the catholic visible church will have members sent by them as representatives; but if there shall be in it members sent from such a variety of particular churches as may fairly represent the majority of that part of the catholic visible church, whose scriptural profession warrants our sacramental communion with it, submission may be due to its decisions in the Lord, even from a particular church which, on account of its local distance, has not had an opportunity of sending any member to it as a representative. For, according to the supposition, that particular church is a minor part of the professing body, the majority of which is sufficiently represented in that synod or council. That such a subordination was acknowledged by the ancient churches appears from the frequent appeals of their bishops and others to councils, and from the regard which was paid to the determinations of councils as ecclesiastical rules of general obligation. In Old Testament prophecy it was foretold as one of the privileges of the New Testament church, that there should be an high way out of one nation into another; that the Assyrian should come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and that the Egyptians should serve with the Assyrians; to intimate, that there should be such a spiritual intercourse among particular churches in different nations, as would serve to manifest their unity, to strengthen one another, and to advance the interest of Christ's kingdom in general. These ends will be eminently promoted, when the ministers and elders of various particular churches, residing in different countries, shall meet in synods and councils, in order to ascertain and exhibit the only true doctrine, worship and government of the church of Christ, according to his word; or, when, however locally distant from one another, they shall acknowledge themselves to be one professing body; of which the several parts are subordinate to the whole. Nor does the subordination of such distant particular churches to a court representing the majority of the whole, which may be called a general synod or council, lessen the authority of those churches, or abridge their liberty in judging cases that belong peculiarly to their respective jurisdictions. For it is not supposed, that such a general synod can meddle in any case, the cognisance of which properly belongs to the courts of any particular church, unless it be brought before that synod by reference or appeal; that is, unless the courts of the particular

church have judged the examination of the case by the general synod would be beneficial. If the case brought from a particular church respect a point of doctrine, after a precise statement of it, (which may be made in writing as well as by word of mouth,) the general synod has no farther need of any members of that church in order to a discussion of the question, which is then simply this; what is the determination of the Holy Spirit speaking in the scriptures concerning such a point? In the same way, a general synod might endeavour to remove differences about terms of communion, and about appearances of defection from the cause of Christ; the removal of such differences being manifestly necessary to the peace and edification of his church. With regard to private or personal cases, the courts of a particular church will scarcely ever find it expedient to make a reference or to admit an appeal to a court at so great a distance as that between Europe and America; because in such cases, there may be necessary evidence, which it would be impracticable to carry thither. Such are the principles of the connexion between the associate body in this country and their brethren of the general associate synod in Scotland. There seems to be no dependence in this connexion, but what is necessarily implied in the subordination of Presbyterian church courts. The preacher, in delivering the passage you alluded to, seemed to have forgotten the dignity of the pulpit.

> 'Tis pitiful
> To break a jest, when pity would inspire
> Pathetic exhortation,
> And serious dealing in a serious cause.

It is true, the ministers of the associate body sometimes endeavour, in their public ministrations, to shew the evil of occasional communion with erroneous teachers; the evil of substituting hymns of human composure in solemn and public worship, instead of the psalms and songs which God appointed to be used in that worship; and similar usages, which are condemned in their declaration and testimony. But I never heard, that, on such occasions, they deal in ridicule or satire. They always speak of such things seriously; and point out some doctrine or command of God's word, to which the particulars they disapprove, are contrary, and lament men's obstinate attachment to them, as tending to bring God's tremendous judgements upon the church and land.

§ 84. *Alex.* I have heard, that this subordination is the principal difference between the Seceders and the associate reformed synod. Though our time will not allow our conversation to be continued much longer, I wish to hear, before we part, some account of that synod.

Ruf. Men's changing their public profession of religion, may be either good or evil, either matter of praise or blame, according to the quality of what they renounce, and of what they embrace. But when a number of ministers and people have determined to take this step, there are two things, which honesty would require them to do: first, they should openly avow their renunciation of one profession, and their adherence to another; and secondly, they should declare the reasons which have determined them to make the change. If the

ministers who joined in the union, which gave birth to the associate reformed synod, had been explicit in these two respects, it would not have been disputed among the people, as it was for several years after the union, whether they had actually changed their public profession, or not. It was then not uncommon to hear persons that had belonged to either of the two parties, which composed the associate reformed body, affirming, that they had made no change. The difference, however, between the public profession of the associate reformed synod, and that which some of them made, while they were connected with the associate courts, was too manifest to be denied.

In the first place, this difference is evident from the articles agreed to in making the union. There was a copy of propositions which had been agreed to by the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania, at Philadelphia, in April, 1781, as the basis of a union with the reformed presbytery. These articles were rejected by that presbytery. That they were, however, a much fairer representation of the public profession made by the Secession body, than the articles which were carried in the presbytery of Pennsylvania, in June, 1782, was not, and could not be denied: and therefore, the members who receded from the former, and acquiesced in the latter, which were far more general and indeterminate, declined, in so doing, from their former profession.

For example, the first of the articles carried in 1782, in these words: "Election, redemption, and the application thereof, are of "equal extent, and for the elect only;" is far from being so explicit as the proposition which was agreed to in 1781, which I shall read. "There is but one special redemption by the death of Christ for all "the objects thereof; as he died in one and the same sense, for all "those, for whom in any respect he died. Christ and the benefits of "his purchase cannot be divided one from another; and we are only "partakers of the benefits which Christ purchased by faith; and "whatsoever benefits are received, otherwise than by faith, are not "to be reckoned among the benefits that Christ has purchased."*

The 6th article, which was carried in 1782, was expressed in these words: "Though no real or practical subordination to the as-"sociate synod of Edinburgh, in a consistency with Presbyterian "principles, can be pled; yet, from the most wise and important "considerations, the former connexions, whatever they have been, "shall remain as before, notwithstanding this coalescence." This article seems to be self-contradictory; while it asserts, that a real subordination cannot be pleaded for on Presbyterian principles; and yet, that the connexion of the presbytery with the synod, which had been a real subordination, should remain, for the most wise and important considerations. For the presbytery, from the time of its erection, had always owned a real subordination to the associate synod, as consistent with Presbyterian principles. The belief of this

* This last sentence is taken from the 6th article of the synod's act concerning the benefits of redemption, and ought to have been correctly transcribed thus: "We are par-"takers of the redemption purchased by Christ, or of the benefits procured by his death, "only through the application thereof to us by his Holy Spirit working faith in us and "thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling—and whatever things are *actively* "received or used otherwise than by faith in a state of union with Christ, are not to be "reckoned among the benefits purchased by his death."

was undoubtedly professed by the presbytery the year before, when they said, "Our connexion with the associate synod, we are determined to maintain agreeably to our ordination vows." Only about two years before, it was considered by the presbytery as one reason for refusing a protest, offered by one of their members, Mr. Roger, against their determination concerning some points of doctrine, that his protest contained no appeal to the associate synod. In 1771, the same presbytery owned, that, in making an union with the burgher brethren, they had taken steps inconsistent with their subordination to the synod; to which, said they, we have been, and are subordinate.*

The 5th article, carried in 1782, is in these words: "As no opposition of sentiment relative to the important duty of covenanting appears on either side, it is mutually agreed, that the consideration of it be referred to the councils and deliberations of the whole body." In order to form a judgement of this article, it is necessary to observe, that, with regard to this truly important duty, the public profession of Seceders had been ascertained with peculiar precision by the associate presbytery, soon after the secession took place; particularly, in their act for the renewing of the covenants national and solemn league, and in the answers to Mr. Nairn's reasons of dissent. But this article represents the truth on the head of public covenanting, as still undetermined; and therefore, unless what the associate presbytery determined in these acts was erroneous, the members, who assented to this article, declined from an important part of the scriptural profession of Seceders.

The 3d and 4th articles, which, as they relate to the principal matter in dispute between the two parties which proposed to unite, ought to have been expressed with great precision, run in the following terms: "Whereas magistracy proceeds from God, as the Creator and Governor of the world, and the profession of the true religion is not essential to the being of civil magistrates; and whereas protection and allegiance are reciprocal; and whereas the United States, while they protect us in life and liberty, do not impose any thing unlawful on us; we therefore judge it our duty to acknowledge the government of these states in all lawful commands, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. The above proposition is not to be understood in an opposite sense to that proposition relative to civil government, in which the associate presbytery of New-York, and the reformed presbytery have agreed; but only as a plain and undisguised explication of one point of truth, in which we have the best reason to suppose, that the whole body is united."

The proposition here referred to concerning civil government, was one of those propositions, which had been agreed to in the year 1779, by the majority of a meeting at Pequea, consisting of members both of the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania, and of the reformed presbytery, with two members from the associate presbytery of New-York.

* Mr. Marshal's Vindication of the associate presbytery, page 6.
The ministers in the communion of the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania had acknowledged this subordination at their ordination. Ibid. page 15.

Mr. Marshal and Mr. Clarkson, with three elders, had dissented from this proposition in 1779, "judging it to be ambiguous, and such "as consisted with the opinions of those who hold, that scripture "qualifications are necessary to the being of magistracy, where they "have been made so by the people; that the kingdom of Providence, "as it respects the natural ordering of things to their natural ends, "abstracting from their subserviency to the good of the church, be-"longs to Christ as Mediator; and that the Bible is formally the rule "of magistrates in the execution of their office, in the same sense in "which it is the rule of ministers in the administration of gospel or-"dinances; Popish and Erastian tenets, which have been a source of "great distraction and ruin in the world." It may therefore be observed, that the proposition agreed to in 1779, was a *declining* from the principles of the associate body on the head of the civil magistrate; and so was this article, in which that proposition was approved, in place of the proposition on that head, agreed to as the basis of an union between the two bodies, the preceding year; the words of which proposition, I shall now read:

"As long as magistrates in the administration of government, do "not violate the fundamental articles of the constitution; that is, "while they protect the lives and property of subjects, and do not "exercise tyranny over their consciences, though these officers of "government do not profess the true religion, we ought to be subject "to their lawful commands for conscience sake; or, in other words, "protection and allegiance are reciprocal. Therefore all men, whe-"ther heathens or christians, whether professors of the true religion, "or apostates from it, have a natural right, to form themselves into a "body politic, and to elect officers to rule and govern them. The "apostacy of Britain from the covenanted reformation, does not de-"prive them of a right to civil government; and the want of scrip-"tural or covenanted qualifications in their rulers, does not absolve "the people of God from an obligation to be obedient to the civil ma-"gistrate in lawful commands; as the whole of the magistrate's power "lies within the compass of natural principles."

In short, with regard to the articles in general, that were carried in the associate presbytery in 1782, they had either the same meaning with the propositions which were agreed to by that presbytery the year before, or they had a different meaning. If they had a different meaning, then, an agreement to them was a departure from the principles of the secession: for, it could not be denied, that the principles stated in the propositions agreed to in 1781, were those of the secession. But if they had the same meaning, the proposal of them to the members of the reformed presbytery, as if they were different from the propositions which they had rejected, (for they had solemnly rejected these propositions,) was dishonest and insiduous. It may be added, that if the agreement of the members of the associate presbytery to the articles carried in the presbytery in 1782, was a declining from the principles of the secession, as it was a receding from their own former propositions; it was much more so, as it was a receding from the ample exhibition of the principles of the secession in the Judicial Testimony, in the act concerning the doctrine of grace, in the act for renewing the covenants national and solemn league, in

the declaration concerning civil government, and in the act against a new scheme of universal redemption, to all which these members had vowed adherence.

In the second place, that this union made a change in the public profession of the Seceding ministers, appears from the change which it made in their relation to the associate synod, and other religious bodies in Scotland. Before the union, they stood in a peculiar relation to that synod, as maintaining a testimony both against the established church there, and against other parties; particularly, against the burghers and the reformed presbytery, on account of errors in their public profession. Of the various religious societies in Great Britain, it was only the associate synod that the members of the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania were, before this time, connected with in church communion. But now, according to the design of this union, those who joined in it, and their followers, were to have no more connexion with that synod, than with the other bodies now mentioned; or rather, that connexion was to be dissolved for the sake of new connexions. When the articles, which we have considered, were carried by the casting vote of the moderator, Mr. Marshal and Mr. Clarkson, with three elders, protested against any farther proceeding in this union on the ground of these articles, and appealed to the associate synod. They, who were the majority, refused to admit the protest, on account of the appeal it contained. In the very act of refusing this protest and appeal, it appeared, as Mr. Marshal justly observes,* that they had changed their ground. We may warrantably infer the change of their public profession, from the change of their ecclesiastical connexions.

In the third place, it appears that those ministers, who joined in this union, changed their public profession, because, in consequence of that step, they ceased to exhibit any particular testimony or declaration of the grounds of their separate communion, or to require of their people any adherence to such a declaration, as a part of their public profession. Mr. Wilson informs us, that, in his time, the associate presbytery required such as acceded to them, or came under their inspection, to signify their approbation of the Judicial Testimony;† and Mr. Gellatly assures us, that the same thing was one of the terms of communion, which he and his brethren used to declare to the people on preparation days, before the administration of the Lord's supper.‡ The associate reformed synod said, in the first edition of their constitution, "that it was their intention to avail "themselves of every call to bear a pointed testimony against the "errors and delusions which prevail in this country." These words led some people in their communion to expect that the synod intended to publish a testimony similar to that of the associate presbytery in the year 1736. But after these people had waited several years, they were given to understand, that no other *fixed testimony* was intended to be exhibited by this synod, than the confession of faith, the larger and shorter catechisms, the directory for worship, and the form of church government; and in 1797, the synod published an act assigning

* Vindication, &c. page 36. † Continuation of the Defence, chap. v.

‡ Mr. Gellatly's Observations on the Detection Detected, page 192.

reasons for this determination. This was manifestly a departure from the public profession of the secession church. For that profession acknowledges that several even of those churches, which own these composures of the Westminster assembly, are still going on in such a course of obstinate and increasing defection from reformation attained, as requires the faithful who are in a state of secession from them, to continue, as yet, in that state. This acknowledgment, which is certainly asked of all who join in the communion of the secession church, is not made by a simple assent to the Westminster assembly's confession, catechisms, form of church government, and directory for worship. For these compositions, however excellent, give no description of the present state of the visible church; and without such a description understood and assented to, the acknowledgment now mentioned cannot be made. Those therefore who, after they have been members of the secession church, have discarded a testimony describing the errors and other evils of the present day, and hold an assent to the confession of faith, and the other compositions, now mentioned, of the Westminster assembly to be a sufficient profession in the present state of the church, are no more adhering to the peculiar profession of the secession body: they have changed their ground; and join themselves to those who both own that confession and openly reject the secession testimony.

In the fourth place, the occasional communion, acknowledged to be a duty in the first constitution of the associate reformed synod, indicates a departure from the public profession of Seceders. The occasional communion meant is not the sacramental communion to which persons are occasionally admitted in one part of the church, while their usual place of abode, and of attendance on public ordinances, is in another part of it. The warrantableness of such occasional communion is not disputed. But what is intended is a communion sometimes in public, and even sealing ordinances with pious people of other denominations, who obstinately reject some part of our public profession; and therefore have not fixed communion with us. It is the catholic or latitudinarian scheme of church communion, which we formerly considered, and against which the secession church has uniformly testified ever since its erection.

Other things might be mentioned to this purpose; but what has now been advanced is sufficient to shew, that the ministers of the secession who joined in this union changed their public profession: they relinquished a purer witnessing profession; and adopted one that was laxer, more accommodating and congenial to the ruling principles and manners of the times.

§ 85. *Alex.* The plan of the associate reformed synod tends to union; whereas the testimony of the Seceders is used by many of them as the rallying point of party; and tends to inflame the wounds in the body of Christ, which it should be our study to have speedily and thoroughly healed.

Ruf. In order to determine whether the plan of the associate reformed synod be preferable to that of the associate body, two or three things ought to be considered.

In the first place, it ought to be enquired, whether the rallying of Seceders, or their uniting in one body under the banner of a Testimo-

ny, be only for propagating the knowledge and profession of the truth as it is in Jesus, and the practice of the duties he has enjoined? If this be the whole design of their testimony, it ought rather to be esteemed the rallying point of all the friends of Christ, than that of a party. On the other hand, if any assert that something else is the design of their testimony and association; the assertion must either be proved; or it must be considered as no better than the calumnies that were cast by the heathens upon the primitive christians; and by the followers of the papal antichrist upon those that appeared as faithful witnesses against their abominations.

In the next place, it ought to be enquired, Whether the plan of the associate reformed synod in relation to our communion be not more schismatical and irregular, than that of the associate body: Both these bodies keep up a separate communion: but there is one obvious difference between them; which is, that, whilst the former in their testimony, deal plainly with us, declaring the reasons of their separate communion, the latter are silent on that head. It is schismatical and disorderly for any to keep up a separate communion, when their declared reasons are not sufficient. But it is still more so, to keep up a separate communion, without any declared reasons at all. In this respect the plan of the associate reformed synod appears to be an inexcusable violation of the peace of the church. Their separate communion, if they have nothing of importance to offer as the ground of it, is very sinful; as it promotes groundless prejudices and calumnious misrepresentations: it makes a division in the church of Christ without shewing how it may be healed. The people that belong to such a separate communion, if they are not furnished with solid and scriptural reasons, are apt to take up with any uncertain report or factious opinion that occurs, as an apology for their party. How many at this day are keeping up separate communions ignorantly, or from a regard to old or local customs received by tradition from their fathers; that is, they are perpetuating unreasonable divisions in the church of Christ, in which there ought to be no divisions at all.* But if the members of the associate reformed synod have important reasons for their separate communion, they ought to declare plainly what they are. While they neglect to do so, they neither act a faithful part towards God, nor a friendly part towards us: they ought not to suffer sin upon us: in doing so they evidence, in the scripture sense, not love, but hatred to us.†

Alex. However the associate reformed synod stand affected to us, they are plainly enough against the Seceders. How excellently do they reason against the seceding scheme of having another standing testimony than our confession of faith! "Unless the synod," say they, "should emit a testimony which would be an immense work, of which "the very bulk would defeat the intention, it would scarcely give a "correcter view of the principles of the synod, than is already given "in their received confession; because it could scarcely hold forth "any truths, which are not therein held forth, or state them upon the "whole with more luminous precision. The opinion, that such a tes-"timony is needful to ascertain the synod's principles, is a direct im-"peachment of the confession itself; since, if they are not sufficiently

* 1 Corinth. i. 10. † Levit xix.

"ascertained by this, it must be either lame or ambiguous; and then "the church demands, not a separate testimony, but an amended con-"fession. If any parts of it are differently interpreted and abused to "the promotion of error, these ought to be explained in detached acts; "and such explanation belongs strictly to the province of occasional "testimonies."

Ruf. What the associate reformed synod seems to intend in these words is a work of a quite different kind from the Secession Testimony first published by the associate presbytery in Scotland, and since that time by the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania. The testimony described by the associate reformed synod has no reference to the event of a secession. For what they say about illustrating the truths of God held forth in the Westminster confession; about supplying what is defective, or explaining what is obscure, might be proper in any state of the church; or upon supposition, there was no more divisions in it than when the Westminster confession was compiled. The immediate and peculiar design of the secession testimony is quite different: it is to enumerate those corruptions in doctrine, worship, discipline and government; which, considered complexly, were the ground of a secession; the continuance of which corruptions occasions the continuance of a separate communion. Thus some articles of their testimony, as it is stated by the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania, respect the corruptions that had taken place in the church of Scotland. Some articles refer to the tenets of Messrs. Simson and Campbel; such as, those testifying against the opinion of an obscure, objective revelation of grace made to the heathens, which is sufficient for their salvation; and against the denial of the necessary Existence and Supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; against the denial of Adam's representation of his natural descendants in the covenant of works; against the scheme that makes self-interest or happiness the chief end and motive of all virtuous and religious actions. Other articles refer to an act of the general assembly condemning some doctrines said to be taught in the book, entitled, the Marrow of Modern Divinity: such as, the articles testifying against those who teach the following erroneous opinions, namely, that men in their natural state are not under the law as a covenant of works; that the gospel is a new law having commands and threatenings peculiar to itself, which do not belong to the law given to Adam; that the offer of salvation in the gospel is made to none but awakened and penitent sinners; that no particular assurance or confidence, that we, in particular, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved, belongs to the nature of saving faith; that believers are still under the command of the law as a covenant of works; and that the fear of punishment and hope of reward are their chief motive to obedience. Other articles refer to the latitudinarian scheme of church communion; the influence of which was a principal cause of the secession in Scotland, and of the separate communion of Seceders being kept up both there and in this country; such as, the articles testifying against those who teach the following erroneous opinions; namely, that we ought not to separate from a church because of its corruptions and its obstinacy in them, till we are assured, that it is become wholly a synagogue of Satan; that the matters, about which men reputed wise and pious differ, ought

not to be made terms of communion in the christian church; that confessions of faith ought not to be terms of communion; that our Lord Jesus appointed no particular form of government in his church; but left it to ministers or to civil magistrates to appoint whatever kind of government they should think proper; that public covenanting is not a duty in New Testament times; and that, if it be a duty at all, it is not seasonable in the present divided state of the church. One article of it is against the opinion of those who deny the duty of acknowledging the present civil government and of obeying its lawful commands. Some articles refer to opinions or practices, which seem to be more prevalent now, than they were at the time in which the secession took place in Scotland; such as, the articles testifying against this opinion, that the sonship of Christ is founded in his office of Mediator; against the practice of singing human compositions in public worshipping assemblies instead of the psalms or songs delivered to the church in the sacred scriptures; against the custom of baptising privately, or when a congregation is not publicly called together to wait on the dispensation of the word.

The opinions and practices now specified were stated in the Testimony of the associate presbytery in Scotland, or in that of the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania, as evils prevailing and obstinately persisted in either in the established church of Scotland, or in the Presbyterian church of America; and as reasons for a separate communion from these churches.*

* From this enumeration of particulars in the Secession Testimony appears the injustice of saying, that to decline from a public and express adherence to that Testimony, is only to lay aside some local peculiarities. For these particulars have no peculiar relation to the situation of the church in any place of the world. They especially who profess adherence to the Westminster confession of faith, the larger and shorter catechisms, the form of presbyterial church government, and directory for public worship, cannot, consistently with their profession, represent the Secession Testimony as made up of local peculiarities. For the truths and duties maintained, not only in the assertory part of that Testimony, but even in the articles referring to facts, are the same with those exhibited in the composures of the Westminster Assembly now mentioned; and therefore, in giving up the public profession of the former, persons decline from the due profession of the latter. Thus, for example, to decline from the article of that Testimony against the acceptance of the indulgences granted to ministers by Charles the second, is to recede from the public profession of the principle contained in chap. xxx. sect. 1, of the Confession: "The Lord "Jesus, as King and Head of his church, has therein appointed a government in the hand "of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate."

In declining from the article against the form of swearing by kissing a book, persons depart from a due adherence to the public profession of the principle exhibited in chap. xxi. sect. 2, of the Confession: "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is in-"stituted by himself; and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be wor-"shipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or any other way not pre-"scribed in the holy scriptures." In dropping the article of that testimony against the General Assembly's omission of adequate censure in the case of Mr. Simson's venting and maintaining Arian tenets, persons recede from the public profession of the principle expressed in the Confess. chap. xxx. sect. 4: "Church censures are necessary for the re-"claiming and gaining of offending brethren, for the deterring of others, for vindicating "the honour of Christ, &c. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers are to "proceed by admonition, suspension and excommunication from the church, according to "the nature of the crime and demerit of the offence." There is an article of that testimony against the submission of the ministers of the church of Scotland to the act of parliament concerning captain John Porteus enjoining each of them to read this act from the pulpit the first Sabbath of every month for a whole year, under the penalty of being declared incapable of sitting and voting in any ecclesiastical court; because such submission was a profanation of the Lord's day, and an unlawful subordinating of themselves in the exercise of their office to the civil powers: To decline from a testimony against such submission, is to recede from the public profession of what is taught in the Larger Cat.

Several things evidently follow from this account of the nature of the Secession Testimony; such as, 1st, That when a warrantable secession from any particular church takes place, such a testimony is indispensably necessary; as it is the ground upon which any can rationally or conscientiously accede to the cause of the secession; which cause, upon the supposition that the secession was just and necessary, is the cause of God and truth.

2. That the Westminster confession of faith cannot answer the purpose of such a testimony: it cannot be rationally supposed to be a proper statement of the grounds of an event, which the Westminster Assembly never had nor could have in contemplation; and this is more evidently the case, when the party, from whom the secession is made, professes adherence to that confession. For, in this case, there is the same necessity for a testimony against the erroneous who own the Westminster confession, that there was for that confession against the erroneous, who owned the former confessions of the reformed churches, or what is called the apostle's creed.

3. That occasional testimonies, such as the associate reformed synod proposes to publish from time to time, do not answer the purpose of a secession testimony: because, when a testimony is published under the name of an occasional one, it does not certainly appear whether it belongs to the ground of the separate communion of those who publish it: for there may be various other occasions than a secession, for such testimonies; such as the case of one or two members falling into error; or the rise and spread of errors among those with whom the people of the secession body were never connected in church communion. It is obvious, that the occasional testimonies of the associate reformed synod could not be intended to shew the necessity of their separate communion; as that communion existed a considerable time before this method was adopted; and as their occasional testimonies are not represented as terms of communion.

4. That the excellence of a secession testimony does not lie in the extent and variety of the articles, of which it consists; but in the plainness and faithfulness, with which it exhibits the cause of a necessary secession or of a continued separate communion. There is rather

quest. 116: "The fourth commandment requireth of all men the sanctifying or keeping "holy to God expressly one whole day in seven:"—and what is taught in the Confession, chap. xxx. i: "The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, hath therein appointed "a government, in the hands of church-officers, to whom the keys of the kingdom of "Heaven are committed." To decline from a testimony against holding church communion with Mr. Whitefield avowing his adherence to the superstitious church of England, is to recede from a public adherence to the plan of church government laid down from the word of God by the Westminster Assembly. To decline from a public testimony against the forming of any representations of Christ in the imagination, is to recede from the public profession of the principle expressed in the Larger Cat. quest. 109: "The second com-"mand forbids the making of any representations of God at all, or of any of the Three "Persons, either *inwardly in the mind*, or outwardly in any kind of images."

Thus we might go through the other articles of the Secession Testimony, and shew that our adherence to them is no more than what is implied in a due adherence to the Westminster confession and catechisms. But it does not follow that a public profession of adherence to the Westminster confession supersedes the necessity of a public profession of adherence to that testimony; as it is a more particular statement of doctrines and duties, which are opposed by many who own that confession in some way or other. For many will own general truths and declarations of duty, who obstinately reject the application of them to particular cases and present circumstances. A general proposition is often admitted; and yet the native and necessary consequences of it denied.

an impropriety in introducing articles, which, however important, have no particular concern in that cause; and which are held forth with sufficient precision in former judicial declarations, particularly in the Westminster confession of faith.

5. That it is a fanciful and even ridiculous objection against the exhibition of a secession testimony, that it tends to an excessive multiplication of testimonies; since there never was, nor is, nor will be any more than one occasion of such a testimony; and that is the secession, the grounds of which the testimony is designed to set forth. At this moment I can recollect but two secessions, which deserve to be called necessary and scriptural, since the compiling of the Westminster confession of faith; of which the one was that of a great many ministers and people from the church of England on account of the imposition of the liturgy and ceremonies, in the time of Charles the second. And that of the associate ministers from the church of Scotland. Nor is it less ridiculous to speak of such a testimony swelling to an unwieldy bulk; since the reasons of a necessary and scriptural secession are usually plain and sensibly felt by the sincere lovers of Christ and his cause, and may be comprised within a small compass. Several of the confessions of the reformed churches make but a few pages; and yet each of them comprehends a faithful and even a particular testimony against the abominations of the papal antichrist. Now one should think, that the secession from the church of Rome required a larger testimony, than the secession from any degenerate Protestant church would require.

Alex. Your observations on the words, which I quoted from the associate reformed synod, have been long. I hope you will be more concise in giving your opinion concerning the following words of that synod. Such a testimony, say they, could not deter from application for ministerial or christian communion with the synod any who are not really friendly to the doctrines of grace; since one who can profess attachment to the confession of faith, while he is secretly hostile to its truths, is too far advanced in dishonesty to be impeded for a moment by any testimony, which the wisdom of men can frame. It could not silence the objections and cavils of such as incline to misrepresent the principles and character of the synod.

Ruf. My answer to these reasons shall be short; since they seem to proceed upon the same mistake as to the nature and design of a secession testimony, with the former passage. For it is not the business of such a testimony to detect the errors that have been taught in opposition to the doctrines of christianity in general; or to silence cavils and objections; but only to state plainly and faithfully the reasons which caused a necessary and scriptural secession. Besides, what is here said serves the synod no better as an excuse for their not exhibiting a more particular judicial testimony, than it would have served the Westminster assembly as an apology for declining the work of compiling the confession. For they might have said, that one who would profess attachment to the former confessions of the reformed church, and yet continue secretly hostile to the truths contained in them, was too far gone in dishonesty, to be impeded for a moment from seeking communion by any confession which the wisdom of man could frame; nor could they expect, that it would silence the cavils and objections

of such as were inclined to misrepresent the principles and character of that assembly. This is too much in the spirit of an indolent watchman, who, having neglected to give the people seasonable warning of their danger, should attempt to excuse his omission, by alleging his apprehensions, that no warning, that he could give, would be regarded. Such apprehension of consequences, is by no means the rule of duty.*

Alex. The synod further observes, that such a testimony could not lift up a perpetual banner for truth; since, from the ever fluctuating state of religious controversy, and the impossibility of foreseeing the different shapes which error may assume, some parts of it would gradually grow obsolete, while some would be deficient; and the same necessity for occasional testimonies would still remain. In the nature of things, it would, after a short time, at most a few years, be out of print and out of date; and, ceasing to interest the public curiosity, would utterly fail of accomplishing its end.

Ruf. The members of synod still proceed upon the same mistake. For if they had attended to the nature of a secession testimony, they could never have supposed, as they do, that it would be necessary, in composing such a testimony, to foresee the different shapes which error may assume; while it is evident, that such a testimony has nothing to do with error, in any other shape than that in which it occasioned the secession; the grounds of which the testimony exhibits. Upon the same false ground, they suppose that a secession testimony for the truths of God will grow obsolete, or be altogether neglected. There are only two ways, that I can see, in which this can take place. One is, an universal prevalence of the errors against which it is lifted up, and an universal oblivion of the Divine truths which it is designed to maintain. This is a tremendous event indeed: But it will never be permitted by Him whose eyes are upon the truth; who has given his church a promise, *that his name*, which includes all his truths and ordinances, *shall endure forever.* The other way is, when the truths of God, for which the testimony had been lifted up, comes, through the effusion of the Spirit of truth, to be generally and cordially received, and particularly by the ecclesiastical body, from which the secession had been made. The genuine friends of such a testimony desire nothing more than to see it brought, as to its present form, or as maintained in a separate communion, to such an euthanasia, or comfortable issue. Upon this condition, they care not how soon it should be, as the synod say, out of print and out of mind.

* Rufus' time does not permit him to examine abstractly the sentiment here of the associate reformed synod; which is, that a more particular declaration of a point of truth, as in the secession testimony, may be as easily evaded or perverted, as the more general declaration of it in the confession of faith. But it may not be amiss to take notice of a just observation in a publication by the late Rev. Mr. Beveridge, of Cambridge, in the state of New-York, viz. "That many have perverted the thirty-nine articles of the "church of England to an Arminian sense, who would never have attempted to ex-"pound the Lambeth articles in favour of opinions, which they so expressly condemn." So, many will attempt to reconcile the distinction between the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace, and the holding of true repentance to be, in the order of nature, before saving faith, to the Westminster confession, who will never think of reconciling these tenets to the declaration and testimony of the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania. The case is the same with many other points of truth. See the Difference briefly stated, page 17.

§ 86. *Alex.* So, then, you mean, that we ought to adopt the testimony of the Seceders.

Ruf. We should receive the love of the truth, that we may be saved. I am persuaded, were we in our judicial capacity, to assert every truth of God's word, which is an article of their testimony, and to condemn the contrary errors; and were we to comply with the calls they give us to reform, so far as their calls coincide with those of God's word, in a fair and honest application of it to our circumstances, we would soon annihilate the secession body in America. O, Sir, were ministers, elders and people excited, in their several places and stations, to set earnestly about this blessed work of reformation; our land would soon come to be called, as Scotland was in her better days, Hephzibah and Beulah, delighted in and married to the Lord.

Alex. I have no doubt, that glory would dwell in our land, would the inhabitants duly receive the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and make real heart-religion their care. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; like many of the punctilios which the Seceders contend for; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Ruf. I apprehend, we cannot, with any propriety, rank the evils against which the Seceders testify, among indifferent matters; such as the observation of meats and days among the Jewish converts, between the time of Christ's resurrection and the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. For all the reasoning of Seceders about these evils, goes to prove them to be breaches of the moral law, and to shew, that the practice of them is greatly aggravated, as being contrary to what the reformed churches have attained, and engaged by solemn covenant to keep pure and entire. So that, if we will justify ourselves with regard to what the Seceders call evils, it will not be sufficient for that purpose, to term them indifferent matters, meats and drinks:—We must first prove them to be so: we must shew, that there is no moral evil in the opposition we have made to the testimony which the Seceders have lifted up against the corruptions of the church of Scotland; in our occasional communion with Independents, and other opposers of presbyterial church government; in our neglecting to censure those who propagate error by the press; in the singing of hymns of human composure in public worship, instead of the scripture Psalms and Songs; in allowing many in our communion to continue in such practices as those of swearing by kissing a book, taking the Mason oath, and encouraging public lotteries. We must shew their reasoning on these and the like subjects to be inconclusive. Our attempts to this purpose have hitherto been unsuccessful. I must own, I cannot reflect without astonishment on our inattention to the necessity and importance of obedience to God's revealed will as to the externals of religion. The Seceders often urge, that God's commands about these things bear the same stamp of his authority, with his commands about other things; that he has often given awful manifestations of his wrath, on account of men's neglect of some observance in the external part of his worship; as in his declaring Saul to be rejected for taking upon him to offer sacrifice before Samuel came; in smiting Uzzah for touching the ark; in slaying the man of God

who prophesied against Jeroboam's altar for turning back to eat bread and drink water, contrary to God's command; in the controversy which God had so long with the Jews for their worship on the high places. It is the concern of those who desire to be found faithful, to fall in with every command of Christ, though it were about the smallest matters: and it is diametrically opposite to the new nature of his people, to account any deviation from the rule of his word a small matter. It is the Lord's way to bring his people, in the first place, to an organized church state; to a pure profession and pure ordinances. This order is represented in the vision of the dry bones, in the xxxviiith chapter of Ezekiel. In the first place, bone came to its bone; flesh and skin covered them above: after that, breath came into them; they lived, and stood up a great army. The Lord will turn to the people a pure language; that is, a pure profession and pure ordinances; and then they shall call on the name of the Lord, and serve him with one consent.

Alex. Though I should grant, (what you urge so much,) the importance of the matters contended for by Seceders; yet, you allow, that they are expressed or implied in our confession of faith, in our catechisms, in our form of church government and discipline, or in our directory for the worship of God. Is not a profession, then, of adherence to all these forms, a sufficient profession of the christian religion? And is it not, therefore, unnecessary to adopt the particular acts of the associate presbytery; such as, their judicial testimony, their act concerning the doctrine of grace, their act concerning the renewing of the covenants, their declaration concerning civil government, and their sentence concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths?

Ruf. The adherence to the Westminster confession, which our church had agreed, in 1726, to require of candidates for the ministry, was accounted, by Seceders, lax and undeterminate; as it was attended with an exception of what any of our presbyteries might, in licencing or ordaining a candidate, "judge not essential or necessary "in doctrine, worship and government." This exception is omitted in the form of adherence which our presbyteries are directed to require in the form of government adopted by our synod in 1788. The words of that form of adherence are, That the candidate "sincerely "receives and adopts the confession of faith of this church, as con-"taining the system of doctrine taught in the holy scriptures; and "that he approves of the government and discipline of the Presby-"terian church as prescribed in the form of the government and dis-"cipline of the Presbyterian church in these United States." But still our adherence to the Westminster confession, and to the Presbyterian form of church government will appear defective and lax, when the form of expressing it now recited, is compared with the terms in which the church of Scotland appointed candidates at their licence and ordination to express their adherence to that confession: every such candidate there being required to declare, that he owns and believes the whole doctrine contained in that confession; and that he owns it as the confession of his faith: when we consider, that our judicatories have not, by any judicial deed, renounced the prelatical and independent forms of church government, as contrary to the word of God;

nor acknowledged the exception above-mentioned in the act of 1726, to be so, though it is left out in the form of government and discipline more lately agreed to; and especially, while the scheme of occasional communion in sealing ordinances with Episcopalians and Independents is not censured, but rather countenanced and approved by ministers and people in our church. Besides, the difference between the state of the church at the time when the Westminster confession was composed, and her present state, may convince us that some other statement of various points of truth and duty, in opposition to the errors and corruption of our day, is necessary to a faithful exhibition of the cause of Christ now, than what was necessary to such an exhibition of it then.

Before we part, I may add some observations on the continued regard, which is due to such testimonies, or ecclesiastical deeds, as those, you have just now mentioned, of the associate presbytery.

The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the store-house of all Divine truth; and nothing is to be received as such, but what is found in these inspired writings. The only ground upon which we are to receive any proposition, as a Divine truth, is the holy scriptures, and not any creeds, confessions or testimonies of men; and yet, the scriptures themselves bind us to receive and hold fast such creeds, confessions and testimonies, so far as they are consonant to the scriptures, and evidently express truths contained in them. Such acts or deeds of the church of Christ as exhibit any Divine truth, in opposition to error, are to be zealously maintained:

1. As they declare what particular truths revealed, or duties enjoined in the Divine word, the church is, at any time, more especially called upon to appear for and defend. Such a truth or duty is called *the word of Christ's patience*, or *the present truth*.*

2. As they are laudable examples of the due exercise of that authority, with which Christ has intrusted the ministers of his church, in the judicial assertion of truth, and in the judicial condemnation of error. Such deeds of the church, passed in one time or place, are to be imitated in other times and places. The apostle commends the Thessalonians, because they were imitators of the churches of God, which were in Judea. There is nothing in which we ought to be more careful to imitate other churches, than in their acts for the maintenance of Divine truth.†

3. As they declare what the church of God has attained. In this view, we cannot refuse to espouse and retain acts or deeds of church judicatories, the scope or design of which is undeniably the maintenance of truths revealed, or duties enjoined in the scriptures, without being chargeable with backsliding, or declining to go forward in the path of duty; nay, without disobedience to the solemn charge which Christ gives to each particular church, *Hold fast that which thou hast*.‡

4. As they are memorials of the Lord's goodness in bringing his church in particular times and places to the scriptural profession of the truth, or to the scriptural order represented in such acts or deeds. Every such attainment is of the Lord; and belongs to the salvation

* Revel. iii. 10. † 1 Thessal. ii. 14. ‡ Revel. ii. 25—iii. 11.

of the church which he is working.* Whatever belongs to the reformation of the church is to be acknowledged as an instance of the great goodness he has bestowed on the house of Israel, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses.†

5. As every such act or deed is a public profession of adherence to some particular truth or duty; and implies an engagement to abide in that profession. Such an act or deed is, in fact, the consent or promise of the particular church, by whose ministers, in their judicial capacity, it was enacted. It is of the nature of a vow, as it is a promise made to God; and therefore, a particular church can neither retract nor lay aside such an act or deed, without being chargeable with breach of promise, and with treachery to her God.

Alex. Our conversations, to which we must now put a period, have taught me to think and speak more favourably of the profession of the Seceders. I must own, I am now ashamed of the opinion I once entertained of the principles of the Seceders, while I had not perused their judicial deeds, and had my knowledge of them only through the medium of partial or superficial representations.

Ruf. It is obvious, that the misrepresentation of the principles of the Secession church, is less excusable than that of the principles of other religious societies; for while our information of what is held by other societies must be derived, in a great measure, from conversation or private writings, the Secession church has taken care to have every particular, belonging to their peculiar profession, stated with accuracy and precision in their public and judicial deeds. Having, since we began our conversation on the Secession Testimony, reviewed the principal objections against it; and having weighed them in the balance of God's word, looking up to the Father of mercies for his enlightening Spirit; I now find myself fully determined to espouse that cause, and, through grace, to live and die a sincere professor of it. I am persuaded, that the steadfast adherence, which the Secession Testimony requires, to the whole doctrine, worship and government of the church of Christ, and the unanimity, which that testimony also requires, not only of ministers, but of all other church members, in their adherence to all the real reformation which has been attained, since the erection of the reformed churches, will, in a great measure, constitute the more eminent glory of the latter days. For, when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days; the Lord will bind up the breach of his people, and heal the stroke of their wound:‡ they will then see eye to eye, and call on him with one consent.

* Psalms lxxiv. 12. † Isai. lxiii. 7. ‡ Ibid. xxx. 26.

APPENDIX.

No. 1. *Of the duty of the civil magistrate.*

As one principal end of those judicial deeds, which express the agreement of an association of christians in certain articles of Divine truth, and their rejection of contrary errors, is to promote mutual confidence with regard to their joint concurrence in the belief and support of such articles; so in order that these deeds may answer that end, it is necessary that they be preserved inviolable. It is no sufficient reason for altering an expression in any passage of such a deed, that an opposer of the truth, which that passage was designed to express, misrepresents its meaning. Readers may often complain of obscurity, while the fault is not in the composition, but in their own inattention and unjust prejudice. When any passage of a judicial deed has been much abused, or is not sufficiently guarded against misconstruction, it seems better to illustrate the doctrine in a separate deed, than merely to alter some words of the former one: such a separate deed will be more satisfactory, as being a more correct and full declaration of the truth. It seems more especially improper, for one ecclesiastical body to alter any deed of another, making it rather express their own views, than those of the body by which it was originally framed. For hereby the sentiments of one body may be unfairly palmed upon another. Hence the members of the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania, in framing their Declaration and Testimony, declined making such alterations in the confession of the Westminster Assembly, as have been made by the general assembly and by the associate reformed synod, in the articles respecting the power of the civil magistrate; and chose rather to express their judgement on that head, as they have done, in the first part of their Declaration and Testimony.

It is granted, however, that, though these considerations require an ecclesiastical judicatory to be peculiarly cautious of altering public deeds asserting the truths of God in opposition to error; yet there may be cases in which it is proper for a judicatory to use this freedom with its own deeds, particularly, when it appears to the judicatory, that an expression in any of their deeds is liable to dangerous misconstruction; and that an amendment proposed is consistent with the explicit and faithful assertion of the truth. But the following expression in the 15th section of the first part of the said Testimony, to wit, *His whole duty, as a magistrate, respects men, not as christians, but as members of civil society*, is not liable to such misconstruction, but seems necessary from such considerations as the following:

1. To say, that the whole duty of the magistrate, as such, respects men, not as christians, but as members of civil society, is to say no more than that he is an officer not of the church, but of civil society. For it is obvious, that the duty of a person considered as an officer of any body of men, considered, for example, as the colonel or physician of a regiment, is that which respects the members of that body, and not those of any other.

2. The contrary opinion, namely, that the duty of the magistrate respects men as christians, tends to confound his opinion with that of the gospel-minister. These two offices are distinguished from one another in respect of their immediate end; that of the magistrate being the promotion of men's welfare in their secular concerns, and that of the gospel-minister being the promotion of their spiritual interests or of what belongs to their everlasting salvation. But to suppose, that the duty of the magistrate, as such, respects men as christians, is to overthrow this distinction. For if the duty of the magistrate, as such, respects men as christians, it must have the promotion of their spiritual interests or their eternal salvation for its immediate end; that is, it must have the same immediate end with the duty of the gospel-minister, as such. Again, to suppose that the duty of the magistrate, as such, respects men as christians, would overthrow another great distinction between the magistrate, as such, and the gospel minister, namely, that they are officers of different kingdoms. The duty of the magistrate, as such, is the duty of ruling those to whom he stands related as a magistrate; and therefore if his duty respected men as christians, it would be his duty to rule them as christians, or as the church of Christ. Then this absurdity would necessarily follow, that the civil magistrate should exercise his carnal weapons, (for he has no other,) as well as ministers and elders their spiritual censures, in the government of the church. But the magistrate, as such, is not an officer in the kingdom of Christ. To ministers and elders, and not to him, has Christ committed the keys of government in his kingdom, which is not of this world. It is, then, a great distinction between the magistrate, as such, and the gospel-minister, that the duty of the former respects men as members of civil society, whilst that of the latter respects them as christians.

3. If the duty of the civil magistrate, as such, respects men as christians; then he may punish heretics and schismatics as such. For it cannot be denied that the magistrate has a right to judge men authoritatively, in the character in which they are formally and directly the object of his official duty, and to deal with them according to his judgement. And therefore, if the duty of the magistrate, as such, respects men as christians, that is, if they are formally and directly in that character objects of his official duty; then he has a right to judge authoritatively, whether they be heretics and schismatics, or not; and having judged them to be such, he has a right to punish them as bad christians. Thus the supposition, that the duty of the magistrate, as such, or as armed with fines, prisons, gibbets, respects men as christians, will justify the magistrate's bloody persecution of heretics and teachers of error, or of those whom he takes to be such. For with regard to intrinsic demerit, wrongs done to the church of God are more

criminal than wrongs done to civil society; the murder of the soul deserves heavier punishment than that of the body.

4. This position, that "the whole duty of the magistrate, as such, "respects men, not as christians but as members of civil society" is agreeable to the doctrine taught in the Declaration and Defence of the associate presbytery's principles concerning the present civil government in Britain. To this purpose are the following words of that Declaration. "The public good of outward and common order in all "reasonable society unto the glory of God is the great and only end "which those invested with magistracy can propose in a sole respect "unto that office." Here it is to be observed, that the public good of outward and common order in all reasonable society is no other than the good of civil society; for though it comprehends the good of such order in particular religions, as well as other societies; still, the object of the magistrate's office is not the good of any society as a religious, spiritual and supernatural society, but the good of the outward order common to it with other reasonable societies. And as this public good of outward and common order is the only end, which the magistrate, as such, or in a sole respect to his office, can propose; so the whole duty of the magistrate, as such, which can be no other than what is referred to that end, and which has nothing in it peculiar to christians, must respect men not peculiarly as christians, but generally as members of civil society.

The associate presbytery adds in the same place the following words: "And as in prosecuting this end civilly according to their of-"fice, it is only over men's good and evil works, that magistrates can "have any inspection; so it is only those which they must needs take "cognizance of for the said public good." The duty of the civil magistrate, as such, is here plainly limited to such works as it is indispensably necessary for him to take cognizance of for the good of outward and common order in civil society. These are the works of men, considered not as christians, but as members of civil society.

The associate presbytery say farther concerning the duty of magistrates: "As the whole institution and end of their office are cut out "by, and lie within the compass of natural principles; it were absurd "to suppose, that there could or ought to be any exercise thereof "towards its end, but what can be argued for and defended from na-"tural principles." It is plain, that the duty, which respects christians, as such, is peculiar to those who enjoy the benefit of the supernatural revelation, of the christian religion; and that it cannot be rightly argued for or defended on any other principles than those of that revelation. We can neither know nor do our duty to a christian as such, unless we know what a christian is; and we cannot know what a christian is, without the knowledge of revealed religion. Hence, it is evident, that the duty of the magistrate, as such, being no other than what can be argued for and defended from natural principles, is such as respects men, not as christians, but as members of civil society.

What is stated in the words of the associate presbytery now quoted, as a judicious writer observes, is the very hinge on which the controversy with the antigovernment people turns.*

* See Mr. Morison's Present Duty, page 543.

But though the office and duty of magistrates, as such, does not respect men as christians, it does not follow, that there are no important duties incumbent on him with regard to religion and the professors of it. A physician owes many indispensable duties to men as christians, or as members of civil society, though his duty as a physician respects them only as labouring under, or as liable to bodily diseases. So a magistrate ought to be himself a christian, and ought to lay out himself zealously for the advancement of the christian religion; though his duty as a magistrate respects men, not as christians, but as members of civil society.

1. It is the duty of the magistrate, as such, to punish vice as contrary to the peace and order of civil society. The vices which he is bound to punish in this view are breaches not only of the second, but of the first table of the moral law; such as, the open contempt of the great truths of natural religion; the profanation of God's name, by swearing in common conversation; perjury; the profane and contemptuous disturbance of public worship; the open breaches of the sabbath considered as a reasonable portion of time set apart for the worship of God; and in general all open contempt of the government of God, which lies at the root of all moral obligation, and of all confidence in human society. The due restraint and punishment of these evils by the civil magistrate are necessary for preserving the external peace and order of society; and at the same time are subservient to the profession and practice of the christian religion.

2. The civil magistrate, as such, ought to defend the church as a reasonable society against all such as attempt to take away or infringe the liberty of her members in professing and propagating the christian religion. To this purpose was the proclamation of Cyrus with regard to the building of the temple at Jerusalem. In this view, the laws of the civil state which were made in Scotland in the year 1560, and afterwards in the period between 1638 and 1649, in favour of the true reformed religion, may well be considered as belonging to the work of God which was then carried on—so far as these laws were for giving protection and security to the subjects in the profession of that religion, without prejudice to others in their civil rights. But in these laws, those who constituted the reformed church, were not considered spiritually as christians, but rather civilly, as peculiarly valuable members of civil society. As a christian and member of the best reformed church, the magistrate ought to know, that the religion of Protestants is better than that of Papists; that the principles of the Protestant religion are maintained more purely by Presbyterians, than by Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, and others; and that as the purest form of religion is most conducive to true godliness, so it is most beneficial to civil society. According to this knowledge which he possesses as a christian, he ought to proceed, as a magistrate, in granting those who belong to the purest church such distinguishing favours as are optional and arbitrary to him; such as that of employing the members of the purest church in places of public trust; or any other privilege that he can confer on them as most esteemed members of civil society, without prejudice to the natural rights, the liberty and property of others. In this matter, the church is considered as a reasonable society comprehended in the general society of the nation or common-

wealth; and the purest particular church is most favoured as being a reasonable society, whose principles are such as have the happiest influence on the welfare of the whole nation.

3. The civil magistrate, as such, ought to abolish all such laws and customs in the civil state as cannot be defended by any natural principles of reason. The civil state ought to annul the laws that give the magistrate a power of dictating to the church, which is a spiritual or supernatural society, what she is to receive as the matter of her faith or the form of her worship; or a power of interfering in her discipline or government; and also to abolish such superstitious customs, as that of putting a stop to the public business, on account of certain holy days, the periodical observation of which has no warrant from natural or revealed religion; or that of swearing by laying the hand upon and kissing the gospels. Much was done in removing such evils by the civil powers of England and Scotland, both in the reformation from popery in the sixteenth century, and in the reformation from prelacy between 1638 and 1649.

4. The civil magistrate, set up by a people, who generally profess the christian religion, ought to be a christian; and to exercise his office in subserviency to the interests of Christ in his church. It is true, that civil qualifications alone constitute *the being* of the magistrate as such; and entitle him to the obedience of the people in his lawful commands, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. But, in order to *the well-being* of the magistrate, it is necessary, that he be a sincere christian. A christian is under greater ties, and has more powerful motives to be faithful in performing the duties of his station, than any other; and we have seen, that there are many duties incumbent on the magistrate as such, the faithful discharge of which would be eminently beneficial and encouraging to the church of Christ. But, besides what he may do by the discharge of the duties which necessarily belong to his office, being himself a christian, and a faithful member of the church, he may greatly promote her interests by his pious example, and by his improving every opportunity, which his high station gives him, of encouraging his people to steadfastness in adhering to all the truths and ordinances of the Lord Christ. He might be often saying to a minister, what the apostle bids the Colossians say to Archippus, *Take heed to the ministry, which thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*

No. 2. *Of Christ's Mediatory Kingdom.*

Some suppose, that all outward things in the kingdom of nature and providence, even considered in their material being as obvious to our external senses, and considered in their natural ordering to their natural ends, are now transferred to the mediatory kingdom of Christ, upon a new right of donation and purchase. Whence, indeed, it would follow, that the common enjoyment of all outward things, by all unbelievers through the world, as well as by all believers, by beasts as well as men, must be properly through Christ as Mediator, and through the channel of his blood. On this subject the following observations are offered:

1. All Divine prerogatives and administrations are to be ascribed to him, *who is* our glorious Mediator; though they must not all be ascribed to him *as* Mediator. Our Lord Jesus, considered as God, and considered as Mediator, is one and the same person; and therefore, when we ascribe some things to him as God, and other things to him as Mediator; we do not ascribe different things to different persons, but all to one and the same glorious person.

2. The confounding of our Lord's Divine and essential glory with his mediatory and acquired glory, must be a detracting from his Godhead. For to suppose, that all the glory, or glorious characters and administrations, ascribed to him in scripture, are to be understood of him as Mediator, would be to deny his Godhead. It would be to suppose, that his Godhead is absorbed in the glory of *his* mediatory character; as the Eutychians of old, pretended to magnify the Mediator's glory, by supposing, that his human nature is absorbed in the glory of his Divine nature.

To suppose that his common providence by which, as God, he governs all his creatures, and orders all natural things in their natural course to their natural ends, is now transferred to his mediatory character and kingdom, is to suppose that a Divine dominion over the creatures, which is inseparable from his Godhead, is laid aside, for giving place to a mediatory dominion; a supposition which would be a material denying or degrading of his Godhead.

The same administrations, materially considered, are in different respects, to be ascribed to Christ, both as God, and as *Mediator*. For each of his administrations, as it supposes or implies a satisfaction to law and justice, must be ascribed to him as Mediator: but the same administration, considered in another respect, must be ascribed to him as God. Thus, the judgement of the ungodly, considered as it terminates in their perdition, belongs to him as God. But the same judgement, as it terminates in the vindication of the glory of his despised grace, in the display of his glory as God-man, or in the greater triumph of his people, belongs to him as Mediator.

3. The mediatory kingdom of our Lord Jesus is not *of* this world in any respect. Though his mediatory kingdom is *in* this world, and the things of it are things *in* this world; yet no outward things whatsoever, considered as things *of* this world or worldly things, can be justly looked upon as belonging to his mediatory kingdom, or as belonging to him upon a right of donation and purchase, no such donation of purchase being either needful or competent to him, who is *over all God blessed forever*. But the gracious and supernatural ordering of outward material things, unto gracious and supernatural ends, in the channel of love and favour to his people, and in subserviency to the purposes and glory of free grace in their salvation; all such ordering of these things, or these things considered as coming through the channel of such gracious ordering, are not *of* this world, though *in* it. And thus, "the providence of God, after a most special manner, taketh "care of his church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof."*

4. There can be no proper enjoyment of any benefits from Christ, as benefits of his mediatory kingdom, but in a way of fellowship with

* Confession of Faith, chap. v. § 7.

him by faith. Thus no common material benefits, as enjoyed by wicked men or unbelievers, can be considered as benefits of his Mediatory kingdom, or as fruits of his purchase. These material benefits, in the most general consideration thereof, proceed from God as the Creator and Preserver of the world; in which respect, they are common to men and beasts. But more particularly, they always come to men in some covenant channel. They come to wicked men, or unbelievers, through the broken covenant, in the channel of its curse. And so, whatever material goodness is in these things to them suited to their fleshly nature, like the goodness thereof to the beasts; yet there is no spiritual goodness attending them, no Divine love but wrath. On the other hand, these benefits come to believers through the covenant of grace, in the channel of its blessing. And so they enjoy these benefits, in a way of communion with Christ, as benefits of his Mediatory kingdom.

5. The only things that can be properly reckoned the purchase of Christ, or the proper fruits of his death, are such things as the vindictive justice of God could not admit of without a satisfaction. Such is the venting of the love of God to sinners, by receiving into a state of pardon or favour. Such are all the parts of their salvation, with the glory of Christ and of free grace thereby. But vindictive justice could require or admit of no satisfaction, in order to the preserving of the natural world in its natural course, after the fall: for that very justice, in the curse of the broken covenant, necessarily required the preservation of the world, for the seed that had sinned and fallen in their first covenant head. In a word, all doctrine about the shedding of Christ's blood for any of these things, in order to which vindictive justice did and could not admit of a satisfaction, is at best but a doctrine about the shedding of his blood in vain, and injurious to the glory of that mystery. See Mr. Gib's Display of the Secession Testimony, pages 300, 301, 302.

No. 3. *On the obligation of the covenants, which the people of any nation have entered into for religion and reformation.*

It is sometimes asked, how a nation can be under the obligation of a covenant which is entered into by the church only? It is answered, that when the members of a particular church constitute what is considered as a nation or civil state; they ought to devote that nation to the Lord; binding the nation and all the citizens belonging to it to be his people, and to profess and maintain his truths and ordinances in purity. If it be said, that they may as well devote any other nation to the Lord: it may be answered, no; because what they devote to the Lord ought to be their own. As civil relations, such as, husband and wife, master and servant, as magistrate and subject, are acknowledged in the church on account of the various duties they owe to God and to one another. So people may be acknowledged in the church as constituting a family, a commonwealth or nation; and therefore they may devote themselves considered in that capacity to the Lord, and engage to walk in all his commandments and ordinances. But it is urged, that though the individuals that actually come under such an

engagement are bound by it; how does it appear that other persons belonging to the nation, are under the same obligation:—it is answered, that these other persons are represented by the majority, or by those who are considered as representing the nation. This was the case with the people of Israel, Deut. xxix. 14, 15, *Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God; and also, with him that is not with us this day.* No words could have been more proper to shew, that when the Israelites entered into a covenant with the Lord their God, they did so as a nation; so that every Israelite was bound by it, whether he was, or was not, present at the transaction. In short, the nation is sufficiently represented in public covenanting, if there be a majority or some of all ranks, as in Nehemiah's time, when the princes, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, every one having knowledge and having understanding, subscribed the covenant; if there be such a concurrence of high and low, of rich and poor, as would be deemed sufficient in other instances, to constitute a lawful national deed, or something done by the consent of the nation. It may be said, that though such representation might have place in the Jewish Theocracy, it does not follow that it is warrantable in the christian church? But it is answered, such representation is common to all societies. For when we speak of the act of any society, we do not always mean, that all the individuals belonging to the society, or even three fourths of them, had ability, inclination or opportunity for joining in that act. In the church, for example, when a minister is called to be the pastor of any particular congregation, it is only a part of the members that give their votes. The common order of the society requires that part to be the majority. The consequence is, that the candidate is declared to be duly elected; the act of those individuals who gave their voices for him is considered as the act of the whole congregation; and, accordingly, the whole congregation is under the same obligation to regard him as their pastor, with the said individuals. Thus, it is evident, that the representation of the Israelites in their public covenanting, was no peculiarity of their church or nation. If it be asked, How it appears, that the posterity of the church or nation, that have entered into such a covenant engagement, continue under the obligation of it? It is answered, that it appears from the text just now cited in Deut. xxix. 13, 14, that the covenant which was made with Israel in the plains of Moab, was made not only with the Israelites then present, but also, with their posterity: for not only the existing members of Israel that were absent, but also, posterity were meant by *him that was not with them on that day.* In Jeremiah's time, the Jews were considered as under the engagements which were entered into in the time of Moses. Jerem. ii. 20, *Of old time, thou saidst, I will not transgress.* Nor is it any Jewish peculiarity, for posterity to be under the obligation of the engagements entered into by their ancestors. This is the case with posterity in every society while it subsists. The individuals, of which a society is composed, are continually changing; so that if it were to be considered as the same society no longer than while these continued the same, it would follow, from the births, the deaths and emigrations which daily take place, that the society would be so tran-

sient, that no engagement would bind it for a month, for a week, or even for one day. But the truth is, while the succession of members goes on under the same denomination, the society continues under the obligation of its engagements, in the same manner as an individual. Hence, it is never objected to the obligation of any law, or of any treaty with a neighbouring state, that it was made before an individual of the present age was born. If it be asked, How can all the members of a nation or civil state be brought under the obligation of a covenant engagement to the profession of any particular religion? It is answered, that when persons are under the primary obligation of the Divine law, to the profession of Divine truth, or to the practice of duty, they may be also justly under the secondary obligation of a covenant engagement to the same profession and practice. In this there is nothing unreasonable. But some suppose, that this covenant obligation would lead magistrates to enforce it by civil penalties, and to persecute for errors in religion:—But it is answered, that this does not follow, because the secondary obligation of such engagements is regulated by the primary obligation of the law, which forbids rulers to meddle with what does not belong to their office. If it be insisted, that what persons are bound to by such covenants, may not be truths, but errors:—We still answer, that according to the supposition, we are bound to nothing by the secondary obligation, but what we are bound to by the primary. Hence, even the secondary obligation, while the matter of it is no other than what is found in the holy scriptures, may be called the obligation of the Lord's covenant.

How tremendous are the judgements of God, impending over a nation which is openly trampling upon the covenant engagements that have been entered into by that nation for religion and reformation! The league which the princes of Israël made with the Gibeonites, was binding on the nation of Israel; and on account of Saul's breach of it, four hundred years afterward, the whole land was punished with famine three years, 2 Sam. xxi. 1—9. And will not a people, that obstinately persist in the avowed violation of covenant engagements which they have come under, not about secular concerns, but about the truths and ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, bring desolating judgements upon themselves? Will not God bring a sword upon them, that shall avenge the quarrel of his covenant? Levit. xxvi. 25. We have reason to believe, that God, in his holy Providence, will order his judgements upon a nation that persists obstinately in covenant violation, in such a manner, as will make that sin appear to be the principal cause of these judgements, to the conviction of the surrounding nations. He declares, that this should be the case with the perfidy of Israel, Deut. xxix. 24, 25—Jerem. xxii. 8, 9. Impressions of the approach of public calamity in Britain and Ireland, on account of covenant violation, were common among Presbyterian ministers and people there, especially among those of the Secession, in the last century; such impressions as the judicious Mr. Boston expresses in the following words: "The avowed breach of covenants "made with God for reformation; the blood of the Lord's people "shed in fields and scaffolds, for adhering to the oath of God; the "fining, confining, imprisoning, banishing, and other barbarous usage "of them; whereby, for many years, those nations carried on a war

"with Heaven: These are an old debt lying on the head of Scotland, "England and Ireland; for which God will pursue them; and pursue "them so, that it will appear to be both for principal and interest, "during the time it has lain over. These things are forgotten or "laughed at now, as what we have no concern in; a stone is rolled to "the mouth of the sepulchre, where they are supposed to be buried. "But God will readily arise, if the stone were sealed, and they for-"gotten quite and clean, 1 Thessal. v. 3, *For when they shall say "peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail "upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*" To the same purpose speaks the Solemn Warning published by the associate synod in the year 1758. Having taken notice of the Lord's threatening against Zedekiah for breaking his oath to the king of Babylon, and of the punishment of Israel for the breach of their oath to the Gibeonites, the synod proceeds in the following words: "If the Lord takes such "account of a vow, even in things indifferent; if he claims such in-"terest in an oath sworn, though not unto him; if he so punished the "breach of oaths sworn by his name, even when they were sworn to "another party, about secular affairs; and so punished the same in "remote posterity; shall we suppose, that he will not avenge our hor-"rid violation of those solemn oaths, which we came under in the loins "of our fathers; oaths, which were sworn to Him as the great Party, "in matters of highest and most indispensable duty? No; he has "given assurance of the contrary. He hath denounced concerning "such a generation of covenant-breakers, *I will break the pride of "your power; and I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge "the quarrel of my covenant.*"

No. 4. *Of the Solemn League and Covenant.*

It has been said, though the Scots were bound by every motive of sound policy and regard to self-preservation to make common cause with the English parliament; yet they erred in requiring religious uniformity as the condition of military assistance. But it may be answered, that it was the duty of the Scots to use all their influence for bringing about the reformation of England. And if the English had treated their admonitions on this subject with open contempt, the Scots might justly have refused to enter into a civil league with them. For nothing would have been more contrary to the duty and the true interest of the Scots, than their entering into such a league with the avowed enemies of the covenanted reformation in which they were then engaged. Besides the declared design of the war which Charles the first was now carrying on against the parliament was, that he might have it in his power to subject his people to the yoke of prelatical government and superstitious ceremonies. Thus, it was in a great measure a religious war. And it could not reasonably be expected that the Scots would assist in such a war those who refused to enter into covenant for the reformation of religion; or in other words, with those who refused to give a proper evidence of their adherence to the true religion.

It is farther said, that the Solemn League was ambiguous. That Henry Vane imposed on the Scots by suggesting the clause "according

"to the word of God and the example of the best reformed churches." Some Independents avowed, after they had taken the covenant, that, in taking it, they had an eye to the Independent church of New England; and some understood the prelacy abjured in the Solemn League, of prelacy as it then stood in England, and as different from a moderate episcopacy.

There are two rules according to which contracts or covenants are to be understood. One is, that the words should be taken in the sense which is natural and unforced. Prelacy is described in the Solemn League to be "church government by archbishops, bishops, their chan-"cellors and commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, "and all other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy." In these words, the hierarchy of the church of England, as it then stood, was, no doubt, directly and principally intended. But at the same time that the takers of this covenant swore to endeavour the extirpation of prelacy, they also engaged to endeavour the preservation of the reformed religion in the church of Scotland in doctrine, worship, discipline and government; which was then Presbyterian in its greatest purity. So that all sorts of primacy or jurisdiction of one pastor above another was hereby abjured. With regard to the words, *according to the example of the best reformed churches*, that they were inserted with a view to presbyterial church government, was the judgement of the provincial synod of London, a large body of pious and judicious ministers, who had the best opportunity of being acquainted with the transactions of that period. "Though the Presbyterian government," say they in their excellent vindication of it agreed upon by them, Nov. 2nd, 1649, "though the Presbyterian government, in the practice of it, "be new and strange to the people of England, it is not new to the "churches of Christ in other countries. For most of those places, that "did thrust out the popish religion and government, did receive the "protestant religion and presbyterial government. It is not new in "the protestant reformed churches in France, Scotland, Netherlands, "Geneva, and divers other places, who have had comfortable expe-"rience of this government; and have enjoyed a great deal of liberty, "verity, piety, unity and prosperity under it. And (which we desire "all our respective congregations seriously to consider) therefore it is, "(as we humbly conceive) that the framers of our national covenant "did put in these words, *(and the example of the best reformed "churches)* into the first article of the covenant, that thereby they "might hint to us what that government is, which is nearest the Word, "even that which is now practised in the best reformed churches."

Another rule for the interpretation of such covenants is, that as it is inconsistent with the sincerity and good faith which are indispensable in those who enter into a covenant, especially when it is a religious one, for any of the parties entering into it, to take it in a sense different from that in which it was previously declared to be understood, agreeably to the most obvious meaning of the words, by another principal contracting party; so the covenant itself cannot, on that account, be justly construed as bearing such a different sense. It was well known to the English, previously to their taking of the Solemn League, that by the church government most agreeable to the Lord's word, the Scots understood presbytery; and that they understood the ex-

ample of the best reformed churches, just as the London ministers did, in the above quotation. We cannot suppose, therefore, that when the English entered into the Solemn League, they understood the clause, "according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed "churches," as leaving them at liberty to adopt independency, or any other form of church government than presbytery. For, while they did not previously deny that they understood the said clause, as they knew the Scots did, their entering into the Solemn League necessarily implied a public profession of their being satisfied as to the conformity of presbyterial church government to the word of God. The contrary supposition cannot be made, without charging the English with an open violation of the principles of honour and conscience. But neither the true sense nor the necessary obligation of that covenant would be affected by such wickedness. For God will not hold them guiltless who take his name in vain.

The schisms, therefore, and other public evils, which followed the taking of the Solemn League, like the calamities which followed the covenanting in the reign of Josiah, are not to be ascribed to that sacred engagement, but to the insincerity and perfidy of the people who entered into it. But the taking of the Solemn League was also attended with many good fruits; such as, the more distinct and accurate exhibition of many particulars of the cause of God and truth, in the Westminster Assembly's confession of faith, larger and shorter catechisms, form of presbyterial church government, and directory for public worship; and in the acts and proceedings of the general assembly of the church of Scotland, till the year 1650. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this period, rendered the covenanters eminent in their acquaintance with Divine truth, and with the power of godliness. Many of them loved not their lives unto death for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

It has been said, that those who explain the term *extirpate* in the Solemn League, as some sectaries did, as only describing the duty of a christian in his private capacity, mistook the meaning of that covenant; because all the Puritans were for bringing the bishops very low, and there were then petitions presented to parliament, that required the removal of episcopacy root and branch. They stated that their war was for the ends of the covenant. Some divines spoke of the civil magistrate compelling with the sword.

In answer to these things, it may be observed, that prelacy, as it was by law established and supported by the nation, was a noxious incumbrance; and, in that view, it was not wrong to petition for its removal root and branch: which indeed was done afterwards without any persecution. For when prelacy was abolished by the parliament, provision was made for such ministers as it was found necessary to remove from their charges. Some things in the writings of divines, and in the acts of church courts at that time, spoke too much of the magistrate's using his worldly power for compelling people to profess the true religion. On the part of the Presbyterian divines, this mistake was not owing to ignorance of the distinction between the church and the state: for they explained that distinction very well, in their disputations against the Erastians. But the cause of their error seems to have been, that they considered the political

principles, both of the Episcopalians and of the Independents, as obstructing civil liberty under a limited monarchy, as well as the reformation of religion. But the word extirpate, as it is used in the Solemn League, is not to be determined by the opinions which were then entertained about the extent of the magistrate's office, or even by the political measures that were taken. There might have been some pretence for such a supposition, if the Solemn League had been an official oath belonging to the state, and administered to magistrates only. But the case of that covenant is quite different. It is a deed purely ecclesiastical; the administration of which belonged to the office of the ministers of the gospel, usually on the Lord's day: and it was to be taken not only by magistrates, but by every one having knowledge and understanding. And as to the word extirpate, its connexion in the article in which it is used, as well as the whole scope and tenor of the covenant, leads us to understand it of the use of such means as are competent to church members as such. It is to be understood of faith in the promise in Matth. xv. 13, *Every plant*, says Christ, *which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up or extirpated.* We are to understand this word of the use of prayer for the fulfilment of this promise in the case of prelacy, which is a plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted. We are to understand it of the use of arguments, reproofs and testimonies, as well as of the public censures of the church. Besides, it is to be observed, that the takers of this covenant engaged to endeavour the extirpation, not of prelatists, but of prelacy; not of the erroneous, but of their errors. "Nor is any man hereby bound to offer any violence "to their persons," as the Westminster Assembly observes in their exhortation to the taking of the covenant; which exhortation was approved by both houses of parliament. This observation would have been a falsehood, if the word *extirpate* had been intended to bind the civil magistrate to use his sword against Episcopalians. See Morison's Present Duty, and Stevenson's History.

No. 5. *Of the publication of the purpose of marriage.*

It is not pretended, that the publication of marriage, a competent time before the celebration of it, is absolutely necessary to the legitimacy or validity of marriage. But it belongs to the church of Christ to determine what is regular and becoming the christian character in the manner of its celebration. Both the temporal and spiritual interests of men are so much affected by marriage, that whatever relates to it is important. Though it belongs to civil society; though it is not a sacrament, nor an ordinance of the christian church, as the Papists teach; yet it is an ordinance of God, as the moral Governor of the world: it is called *his covenant*,* both on account of his institution, and on account of the promise made by the parties in his name. The watchmen, therefore, of the church, ought to give a certain sound as to this matter, and to declare, whether it is not more eligible, in the present state of human

* Proverbs ii. 17.

society, to continue to observe the rule of the previous publication of marriage, than to lay it aside.

The reasons, why it appears more eligible to continue the observation of this rule, are such as the following:

1. Because marriage ought to be public. For, as the directory of the Westminster Assembly says, "Marriage is of public interest in "every commonwealth." Hence, when a man or woman proposes to enter into marriage with any person, it nearly concerns both the civil society, and the church to which these parties belong, to have an opportunity of knowing who they are. Communicating the purpose of marriage to a minister, or to one or two elders, even when attended with the consent of parents or guardians, is not a notification of the marriage to the public: it is still private or clandestine. *But* a public marriage, for the reason just now given, is more decent and regular, than a private one. And therefore, the rule of the previous publication of marriage ought to be observed, according to the apostolic injunction, *Let all things be done decently, and in order.**

2. The observation of this rule is a proper mean of preventing the dangerous consequences which are apt to attend private marriages. For, by such previous publication of the purpose of a marriage, an opportunity of bringing forward sufficient objections is given to many persons, who would otherwise have no such opportunity. On this account, it is a rational mean of preventing marriages, against which there are sufficient objections; of preventing bigamy, the violation of contracts, and the discord of families. In short, precipitate marriages, which, on various accounts, are prejudicial to the welfare of the parties, and to the interests of religion, are the native consequence of neglecting the observation of a rule, which affords time, after the proposal of a marriage, for farther deliberation and counsel.

It is one of the rules given in our larger catechism for the right understanding of the ten commandments, that, under one sin *that* is forbidden, all the means and occasions of that sin are forbidden. This necessarily implies, that the wilful omission of such means as have a known tendency to prevent that sin, is also forbidden: it is a sinful omission. Hence it follows, that when marriages, by which persons are unequally yoked together, or involved in the guilt of violating any lawful pre-contract, or of doing injury to parents or others, are forbidden; then, the open, unnecessary and wilful omission of such a proper mean of preventing these evils, as the previous publication of the purpose of marriage is found to be, must also be forbidden; must be sinful and scandalous.

It ought not to be objected, that the observation of this rule does not always prevent these disorders. For the use of it must be requisite, while it has a reasonable fitness to answer the end of preventing the evils now mentioned; while, in experience, it has often actually prevented them; and while it does not hinder, but rather promote the use of all other means.

3. Because a good and useful rule, which has been authorised, both in the church and in civil society, almost from time immemorial, ought not to be laid aside without one solid reason against it, and without being shewn to be unsuitable to our present situation. The

* 1 Corinth. xiv. 40.

previous publication of marriage appears to be an ancient order. The history of civilized nations, and especially sacred history, represents marriage as a public transaction. Boaz married Ruth publicly, before the elders and people at the gate of Bethlehem. The marriage at Cana of Galilee was public, where it is evident, there was a multitude of guests, and where our Saviour, by the miracle of turning the water into wine, manifested forth his glory. That the espousals among the Jews were public, appears highly probable from the public feast, called in the Rabinical language *Kedushim*, which Buxtorf renders *sponsalia sacra ob matrimonium*, i. e. sacred espousals in order to marriage;* and from the law condemning a person who had criminal intercourse with a betrothed damsel to the same punishment, which was incurred by adultery;† in which case, we cannot reasonably suppose, that a person would have been liable to such a charge, unless there had been an opportunity given him of knowing the damsel's espousals by the publication of them. The custom of espousals some time before the celebration of marriage appears to have obtained for several ages in the christian church. Ambrose speaks of a woman having made espousals before ten witnesses.‡ There are various regulations in the pandects of Justinian concerning this matter. Espousals or betrothing differed from marriage, as the promise of a thing differs from the performance of it. There were distinct ceremonies peculiar to each. The espousals were an agreement between the parties concerning their future marriage; attended with gifts and other tokens, which they gave one another to signify the engagement they came under to enter, at a certain time, into the marriage relation. This engagement was committed to writing. The whole affair was transacted before a competent number of witnesses. But marriage was celebrated by a minister of the church, or a civil magistrate, a sufficient number of witnesses being present, before whom the parties joined hands, acknowledged one another to be now husband and wife, and solemnly engaged to perform the duties of the marriage relation.

It appears that it was usual among the primitive christians, for any who had a purpose of marriage, to acquaint the church with it. Tertullian, who wrote in the third century, represents it as necessary, for a person intending to enter into marriage with any one, to ask leave of every order of the church, even of the widows as well as of the bishop, the elders and deacons; in order that, if any one had a just objection against the person's intention; such as, that he was about to marry a heathen, a Jew or a heretic, or one too nearly related; such a marriage might be prevented.|| And in another treatise he says, Among us, secret marriages, that is, such as are not publicly professed before the church, are in danger of being condemned, as little better

* Weems' Explication of the Judicial Laws of Moses, page 182.

† Deuteron. xxii. 25, 26.

‡ Ambros. ad virginem lapsam, cap. 6. Si inter decem testes confectis sponsaliis, &c.

|| Qualis es id matrimonium postulans, quod eis a quibus postulas, non licet habere; ab Episcopo monogamo, a presbyteris et diaconis ejusdem sacramenti; a viduis, quarum sectam in te recusasti, &c. Tertul. de Monogam. Vide Binghami Antiquitates, vol. 2. page 371.

than fornication or adultery.* In the reformed churches, the rule of publishing the purpose of marriage a competent time before the celebration of it, has been generally observed. In the church of Scotland, particularly, marriage without previous publication is prohibited as having dangerous effects, excepting when a presbytery in some necessary exigences dispenses with it, according to an act of the 23d session of the justly celebrated assembly which met at Glasgow in the year 1638. In the 12th session of the assembly in 1690, an act was passed approving several overtures, one of which was, that no celebration of marriage without due proclamation of banns three several Sabbaths in their respective parishes, should be allowed; recommending it to presbyteries to censure the contraveners.† Mr. Stewart of Purdovan, in his Collections, certainly expresses the sense of the church of Scotland in her purest times, when he says, That those who get themselves married without proclamation of banns should undoubtedly be rebuked as unnecessary transgressors of a very comely and rational church order. By the 18th article of the 13th chapter of the Discipline of the Reformed church of France, those who live in places where the usual exercises of religion are not established, may cause their banns to be published in Romish churches; as the matter is partly of a political nature.‡

It cannot, therefore, be said, that this rule of the publication of marriage is only occasional or temporary. It has obtained from the early ages of the christian church unto this day. Nor can it be said to be only local; for the reason of it is not peculiar to any country. And the history of the church assures us that it obtained in various countries. Particularly with regard to the reformed churches, it has been still adhered to in those of Great Britain, of Ireland, of France, and of the Low Countries. We know not that a different rule has been, as yet, adopted by any of these churches.

It may be justly said, that this rule is not unsuitable to the circumstances of the United States for this plain reason, that it has not been judged to be so either by church or state. The law in some of the United States expressly requires the parties who propose marriage, not only to obtain the consent of parents, or guardians, if they have any, but also to publish their intentions of marriage, in each respective county where they reside, one month before the solemnization of it.‖

* Ideo penes nos occultæ quoque conjunctiones, id est, non prius apud Ecclesiam professæ, juxta mœchiam et fornicationem judicari periclitantur, &c. Tertul. de pudicitia. Vide antiquitates easdem, page 388.

† Brown's History of the church of Scotland, pages 156 and 323.

‡ Stewart's Collect. Book ii. Tit. 5th.

‖ See the Act of the Assembly of the state of Pennsylvania for preventing clandestine marriages. This act holds the marriages of persons, who are members of any religious society, to be regular, when they are celebrated according to the order used in that society, provided only that notice be given by either of the parties, one full month before the celebration of it, to the parents, masters or guardians.

The Quakers, in the order of their society, shew the sense they have of the propriety of publication before marriage. "When marriage is agreed upon between two persons, "the man and the woman, at one of the monthly meetings, publicly declare their intention, and ask leave to proceed. At this time, their parents, if living, must either appear, "or send certificates to signify their consent. This being done, two men are appointed by "the men's meeting, and two women are appointed by that of the women, to wait upon

And there is no law in any of the United States to deter a religious society from requiring this rule of publication before marriage, to be observed by its own members. With regard to the church, it is well known, that the rule in question has been always acknowledged, and in some measure observed by those of the Presbyterian denomination in this country. It is true, that deviations from it, have not been duly censured. But still in such cases the iniquity has been tacitly allowed to be, not in the rule, but in the transgressors of it. For as the rule in the Directory of the Westminster Assembly stands, as yet, unimpeached; so the substance of it is retained in the New Directory of the General Assembly in this country. "Marriage," say they, "is of "a public nature. The welfare of civil society, the happiness of fami-"lies, and the credit of religion are deeply interested in it. There-"fore, the purpose of marriage ought to be sufficiently published, a "proper time, previously to the solemnization of it. It is enjoined on "all ministers to be careful, that in this matter, they neither trans-"gress the laws of God, nor the laws of the community. And that "they may not destroy the peace and comfort of families, they must "be properly certified with respect to the parties applying to them, "that no just objections be against their marriage." Here it is to be observed, that the General Assembly acknowledge, that the omission of the publication of marriage a proper time previous to the solemnization of it, being manifestly the omission of a suitable mean of certifying that no just objections lie against a marriage, is a transgression of the law of God as well as of the laws of the community; a transgression, of which all that wilfully and unnecessarily omit said publication in their own marriage, or in celebrating the marriage of others, are guilty; a transgression which the Presbyterian church cannot suffer to pass uncensured, without being self-condemned. The associate reformed synod confess the truth in the following words: It is an excellent mean of preventing "improper or unlawful marriages, that the purpose "of marriage, previously to the solemnization thereof, be published "three several Sabbaths to the congregation, at the place or places, "where the parties usually reside."* It is observable, however, that this synod do not enjoin the publication of the purpose of marriage as a standing rule in ordinary cases: and yet they do not point out any peculiarity in the circumstances of people in the United States, rendering such a deviation from the Directory of the Westminster Assembly necessary. The truth is, the disorders, which the previous publication of marriage is a proper mean of preventing, are rather more frequent, and from the continual removing of the inhabitants to new settlements, more apt to be frequent, in the United States, than in Britain; and therefore one is naturally led to conclude, that the use of such publication is more necessary in the former than in the latter.

"the man and the woman respectively, and to learn from themselves, as well as by other "inquiry, if they stand perfectly clear from any marriage promises and engagements to "others. At the next monthly meeting, the deputation make their report. If either of "the parties is reported to have given expectation of marriage to any other individual, the "proceedings are stopped till the matter be satisfactorily explained. But if they are, both "of them, reported to be clear in this respect, they are at liberty to proceed, and one or "more persons of respectability of each sex, are deputed to see that the marriage be con-"ducted in an orderly manner." *Clarkson's Portraiture of Quakerism*

* Constitution of the Associate Reformed Synod, Appendix iii.

It may now be proper to consider some objections that have been offered against the publication of marriages.

Objection 1. There are cases in which it is impracticable to observe the usual mode of publication three several Sabbaths before the marriage. Sometimes the banns, as they are called, are proclaimed only one or two Sabbaths; and sometimes a minister or magistrate is called to celebrate a marriage in such circumstances as admit of no delay.

Ans. Hardly any rules of order are without exceptions; which, however, do not take away the use of such rules. When publication before marriage has been enjoined either by church or state, the exception of extraordinary cases, such as, that of a soldier or sailor being suddenly called to leave the place, where the marriage is proposed to be celebrated, is always understood. They ought to be considered as observers of this rule, who give proper evidence, that they sincerely endeavour to observe it, as far as the circumstances of cases admit.

Object. 2. This rule has not such scriptural evidence as would warrant any church to make it a term of communion.

Ans. The terms of communion, according to our declaration and testimony, are a proper knowledge of the truth, a faithful profession of it, with a conversation and practice becoming the gospel. But it is not consistent with such a profession and practice, for a person to refuse to observe the rules of good order in the society to which he belongs; or to disregard such rules as trivial; while he cannot *shew*, that they are unlawful or unnecessary, or disagreeable to the general rules of the word of God. The previous publication of marriages has been shewn to be scriptural, by the same sort of reasoning and inference from the precepts and examples of scripture, as that which we use in proving the warrantableness of various forms belonging to the order of our churches; such as the distribution of tokens of admission to the Lord's table, employing ruling elders to carry the elements used in the Lord's supper to communicants, the serving of edicts at the ordination of ministers and elders.

Object. 3. The profanation of the Sabbath is occasioned by the custom of publishing the purpose of marriage on that day.

Ans. The principle, now contended for, (which is, that marriage ought to be public, not private,) does not require the publication to be on the Lord's day. If an opportunity occurs of publishing a marriage on another day, it should not be neglected. But if there is no opportunity of publishing it on another day, that which is afforded by the public assemblies on the Sabbath, ought to be embraced. Not that it is an ordinance of the Sabbath, or formally an exercise of religious worship: but because, though it belongs to our secular concerns, yet it is one of those works of necessity and mercy, which must sometimes be done on the Sabbath; or be neglected. For in order that marriage may be regular, it is necessary, that it be public, and not private. Nor would the publication of a proposed marriage on the Lord's day have any such tendency, as has been alleged, to divert the minds of christians from the proper exercises of that day, if the following considerations were duly attended to:

1. That marriage is of peculiarly serious consideration as an ordinance of God; the institution of which is expressly recorded in Gen. ii. 18. It is a contract, as the judicious Mr. Calderwood* observes, partly divine, partly political. Hence, he considers the cognizance of it as belonging to the church no less than to the state.

2. That the church of Christ has a peculiar interest in the right use of marriage, and in preventing the abuses of it. Marriage, in the right use of it, is a means of propagating a godly seed, Mal. ii. 15. The abuse of it is a principal cause of defection in the church. It was one principal cause of that prevailing wickedness which brought the flood upon the old world, Gen. vi. 2, 3. The publication of marriage is one of the means of preventing such abuse.

3. That it is one of the ends or uses of the publication of the purpose of marriage, that the parties, in taking so important a step, in which both their temporal and spiritual welfare is so much concerned, may have the benefit of the sympathy and prayers of their christian brethren. These considerations, all taken together, distinguish the publication of the purpose of marriage from the notification of ordinary contracts about secular affairs; and shew that the former is not, like the latter, inconsistent with the sanctification of the Sabbath. Nor can it be inferred to be so from the levity of some, who are in the habit of laughing or smiling at the publication of a marriage:—In this case, it is not the publication of marriage, but the folly of trifling with a serious matter, that ought to be corrected. Wicked men may make a necessary duty a stumbling-block to themselves. But it does not follow, that the people of God ought to regard it in that light, or to omit the practice of it.

Object. 4. The publication of the purpose of marriage is unknown in many places, and people cannot be brought to understand the use of it.

Ans. This plea cannot be insisted on with any colour of reason, where the publication of marriage is authorised by the law of the state; nor among people who are of the Presbyterian denomination, by whom the Confession and Directory of the Westminster Assembly, or of the General Assembly of the United States, have been received. Besides, it is the business of both magistrates and ministers to inform the people of the rule according to which marriages ought to be celebrated, and to warn them against whatever is irregular or of evil tendency in this matter. The more ignorant the people are, they have the more need of counsel; and the less reason have ministers or magistrates to excuse their negligence on account of the caprice or inclination of such people.

Object. 5. Licences, according to which the parties or their bail enter into a bond, rendering them liable to pay a great sum of money, perhaps 1000 dollars, in case it shall be found that there is a precontract or any other relevant objection against the marriage, may well serve as a substitute for publication, and may answer the ends of it.

Ans. One end, which it cannot answer, is very obvious; it does not make the marriage public. But in ordinary cases, marriage, to be regular, ought, as we have seen, to be public. Whatever penalties

* Altare Damascenum, page 326.

may be incurred by marrying with such a licence as is now described, it is of little avail, while a person who is determined to violate a pre-contract, or any other important obligation, is often ready to enter into a bond himself, or to prevail on some other person to give bail for the sum proposed, if he may thereby accomplish his end. Nor is the danger of the legal penalty in such a bond very great. It is reasonable to suppose, that many would offer relevant objections in order to prevent an unhappy marriage, who could never think of prosecuting the offender, or his bail, for a sum of money, while the principal evil, the marriage, which is likely to render the seduced party miserable for life, cannot be remedied.

On this subject, it is proper to observe, that what is granted by a licence to the parties proposing marriage, is something which they either had, or had not, a right to without the licence. We have granted, that in some cases, persons ought to be married without having the purpose of marriage published the usual time before. And then it is a matter of right: the reason of it does not lie in any licence or bond, but in the peculiar necessity and utility of departing, in such a case, from the common rule. But a licence to depart from that rule, without regard to necessity or utility, from mere favour, or for money, ought not to be granted nor accepted.*

When the Papal authority was cast off by Henry the VIII, of England, a power was given by an act of parliament to the archbishop of Canterbury, of granting licences to marry without publication of the banns three several Sundays, according to the direction in the *liturgy*. The prelates, in a canon dated in the year 1603, appointed such licences to be granted to none, but persons of quality, *as* they are called; and added many precautions; such as, that they should not be granted in cases in which the parties were within the prohibited degrees of affinity; or where there was a pre-contract, or any other lawful bar; or where any of the parties had not obtained the express consent of their parents or guardians, if they had any. Besides, every marriage by such licences was to be solemnized publicly in the church or chapel of the parish in which one of the parties resided. Considering these precautions, the licences of these prelates seem to have been much less liable to abuse, than those described in the objection. Yet, says Mr. Calderwood, notwithstanding the precautions of the canon in 1603, many abuses and enormities are occasioned by these licences: parents are bereaved of their children; contracts of marriage are eluded; clandestine marriages take place,

* The licences here meant, are properly permissions to deviate from the general rule of the law concerning marriage. Thus, a marriage licence in England, is a permission to depart from the order of marriage prescribed in the liturgy of the church, which is there established by law. In Pennsylvania, a marriage licence is a permission to depart from the principal direction of the act of the assembly of that state, for preventing clandestine marriages. But licences must be considered in another light, where they belong so much to the common and legal order of marriage, that the law allows none to marry or be married without them. These two sorts of licences are very different. The former sort are granted in England and in Pennsylvania, on purpose that the marriage may be private; the latter sort, being granted with no such design, rather tend to make marriages public. The former altogether precludes the publication of the marriages so licenced, according to the order of any religious society to which the parties belong: the latter does not at all interfere with the mode of publication, which has been adopted by any religious society.

without the knowledge of the pastor or church, to which the parties belong.*

Object. 6. They ought not to be called clandestine marriages, which are authorised by law.

Ans. The objector seems to confound the epithets clandestine and illegal. If an action be authorized by the law of any state, it will not be illegal, or it will not subject a person to any penalty in that state. But it does not follow that such an action is not clandestine; that is, private, when it ought to be public. A state may be said to permit clandestine marriages, when the law expressly appoints the previous publication of marriages under a penalty; and yet, in particular cases, in which there is no peculiar reason of necessity or utility, grants licences to marry privately. Mr. Stewart, of Pardovan, tells us, that persons may be married clandestinely two ways: One is, when banns are not proclaimed; the other is, when the marriage is celebrated by one not ordained and admitted by the church, nor authorized by the state. The phrase is used in much the same sense, according to Blackstone, in the laws of England.

Object. 7. The publication of marriage is a civil affair, which concerns the commonwealth. But according to our confession of faith, synods and councils are to handle and conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical; and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs, which concern the commonwealth.

Ans. It is true, that they are not to do the peculiar business of the state; they are not to determine what form of civil government should be adopted in any particular country; what penalties should be incurred by the breach of the civil law; or by what ways and means money should be raised for the support of civil government; or what particular forms of procedure should be used in civil courts. Such affairs are so peculiar to the state, that church courts ought not to intermeddle with them, unless, as our confession says, by way of humble petition, in cases extraordinary, or by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate. It is evident, however, that the Westminster Assembly did not view the publication of marriage as belonging to this class: but rather as among these things that are cognizable by both civil and ecclesiastical courts; such as, the manner of taking an oath, by kissing the book of the gospels; the unlawfulness of marriage between parties within certain degrees of kindred; or of divorces in any other cases than that of adultery, perjury, stealing, and many other immoralities. These evils, however, are cognizable by the civil courts and by the church courts in different points of view. In the former, persons accused of such evils, are considered as members of civil society; in the latter, as professing christians. These evils are condemned in civil courts as injurious to the commonwealth, and as breaches of human laws: but in the church courts, as giving scandal and offence to the church, and as breaches of the Divine law.

The sentences of civil courts are enforced by the sword or external force; those of church courts by spiritual censures only. Thus,

* Altare Damascenum, pages 64, 65.

in various respects, the wilful and causeless neglect of the publication of marriage may be a ground of civil punishment in the state; and at the same time, of spiritual censure in the church. It is farther to be observed, that the spiritual kingdom of Christ is distinct from, and independent on the civil state: and therefore, the same action may be agreeable to the laws of the state, and yet censurable as a scandal in the church. Hence, it is no reason why persons should not be censured in the church for such a neglect of the publication of a marriage as is now described, that it is not condemned by the laws of the particular state where they reside. Sessions or presbyteries are courts of another kingdom, quite distinct from the civil state; these spiritual courts have laws and regulations of their own, according to which they are to judge of the conduct of their members; and to censure whatever is found contrary to these laws and regulations; however agreeable it may be to the laws of this or the other civil state. In doing so, church courts cannot be justly said to intermeddle with matters that are without their sphere; for nothing belongs more properly to their business, than to censure whatever they find in the conduct of their members contrary to the word of God, or unbecoming the christian.

No. 6. *On the style or manner of expression which ought to be used in preaching the gospel.*

Edinburgh, August 26, 1761.

The associate synod calling for the report of their committee of overtures, the following overture was given in and read, viz. "That "the synod would consider of some proper method of cautioning those "under their inspection who may be pointing towards public work in "the church against an affected pedantry of style and pronunciation, "and politeness of expression, in delivering the truths of the gospel, "as being an using of the enticing words of man's wisdom, and in-"consistent with that gravity, which the weight of the matter of the "gospel requires; and as proceeding from an affectation to accommo-"date the gospel in point of style, which, if not prevented, may at "length issue in attempts to accommodate it also in point of matter "to the corrupted taste of a carnal generation: and that they would "recommend it to all the ministers of the synod, to shew a suitable "pattern in this matter; endeavouring in their public ministrations, "by the manifestation of the truth in plainness and gravity, to recom-"mend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God: "and that at the same time the synod give caution against all such "meanness and impropriety of language, as have a tendency to bring "discredit upon the gospel; as also against using technical, philoso-"phical and learned terms, that are not commonly understood."

The above being again read, and reasoned upon; the synod agreed, without a vote, in appointing, recommending and cautioning accordingly. And further they recommended to the several presbyteries to have an extract of this act ingrossed in their respective books; and to be careful to conform thereto, in the licensing of young men.

No. 7. *Of the church's endeavouring to go on toward perfection.*

Perfection is an object which the church ought constantly to have in view. *Leaving*, says the apostle Paul, *the principles of the oracles of God, let us go on unto perfection.* The church as well as every believer ought to imitate the example of that apostle which he sets before us in these words; Not as though I had already attained; or were already perfect: but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The propensity to know or attain something new, is, in itself, a necessary principle of our nature as reasonable creatures, and directed by the word and Spirit of God, produces excellent effect; but in our nature, as deprived and destitute of that direction, it degenerates into a capricious fondness for novelty, or into the affectation, ascribed to the Athenians, of telling and hearing some new thing, without regard to its real value or usefulness. The prevalence of this evil in the christian is both a sign and a cause of spiritual declension; as he thereby loses the relish he once had for many of the truths and ordinances of Christ; and it is a great source of error and corruption in the visible church. But this evil may be distinguished from the scriptural endeavours of the church of Christ to make progress in the knowledge and profession of the truth in the following respects:

First, by the church's care to receive all her new information with regard to truth or duty, upon no less authority than that of God, speaking to us in the holy scriptures. Real advances in reformation, either in the case of a particular christian, or in that of the church, are the fruit of diligence in searching the scriptures. See an example to this purpose in Nehem. xiii. 1, and 3. Every proposal of a new step in reformation, should be evidently supported either by the express words, or by the necessary consequence of what is written.

Secondly, by her sincere endeavours to hold fast the measure of conformity to the word of God, which she has attained; according to the charge that our Lord gives the church in Philadelphia, Revel. iii. 10; and the apostle's direction in Philip. iii. 16. It may be justly denied, that there are any *real* scriptural attainments of christians, either in their individual or in their united capacity, that have a native tendency to render them less careful to retain any particular acknowledged point of Divine truth, or less attentive to any particular acknowledged duty, than they were before. To neglect to insert in our testimony *particular articles* of faith or practice, which had been inserted in it in opposition to errors which are still avowed and acted on, under the pretence, that we still retain in our testimony the general principles of truth and duty, is going backward, instead of going forward unto perfection. It is to decline an open unequivocal confession of some part of Christ's name; while that evil is greatly aggravated by our former confession of it.

Thirdly, by the tendency of new attainments, to promote a due regard to the examples of the church's former attainments. These examples are instructive, as they serve to illustrate those parts of the Divine rule to which they are conformable. Hence, that direction in

Song i. 8. The several parts of truth and duty, exhibited in the scripture, are so uniform and consistent, that they recommend one another: they are so much of a piece, that they are called one way: and, with regard to the examples of those who have gone before us, they are called *the old way*, Jerem. vi. 16. Our new advances in reformation should be so much of a piece with the examples of the Lord's people in former times, as to be, on the matter, nothing else but our walking forward in the same old way.

That the associate presbytery first, and the associate synod afterward, have not altogether failed in their endeavours to aim at farther attainments in reformation, cannot well be denied, by such as are duly acquainted with their Judicial Testimony; their act concerning the doctrine of grace; the declaration of their principles concerning civil government; their act concerning the renewing of the national covenant of Scotland, and of the Solemn League of England, Scotland and Ireland; their decisions concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, and concerning the mason oath; their act concerning particular redemption; their testimony against lord Kames' scheme of liberty in the censure of Mr. Pirie, who had attempted to propagate that scheme among their young men who studied under him with a view to the ministry.

No. 8. *Of the cause of God.*

All the truths, ordinances and offices, which the Lord hath made known to his church, are to be considered as belonging to his cause.

There is much opposition made to the cause of God by different bodies of christians, who profess to be cleaving to it. For if these truths, ordinances of worship, and form of government, which God hath revealed and enjoined by his authority, tend to promote his glory, in the conversion, edification and complete salvation of souls; then, *every deviation* from these, must have some opposite tendency.

One of the methods by which God pleads his cause, in a time of general apostacy from it, is that of disposing and enabling a number of persons to hold it fast. They are as prone to wander from God's way as other men. God is not indebted to the friends of his cause: they owe whatever faithfulness in adhering to his cause they attain, to his free grace. They are not to be viewed as a set of men, united in a party, for some notions of their own, or for their own cause, in opposition to other parties. But, if the religious principles they profess and abide by, are warranted by Divine authority, then they are witnesses for God; and God is, by their means, holding forth his cause to men, and calling them to embrace it.

A Sermon, by Robert Chalmers, on Psalm lxxiv. 22. *Pages* 13, 29, 30.

No. 9. *Of the duty of adhering faithfully to a testimony against the errors and corruptions of the present times: an extract from the application of a discourse delivered before the associate synod in Scotland, in the year 1776, by the Rev. Archibald Bruce, professor of Divinity in Whitburn.*

In the *first* place, It is the duty of all, whether ministers or private christians, *to be fully persuaded in their own minds*, that what they appear for is the cause of God; or, in other words, that it is warranted in his word, and conducive to his glory and interests in the world: a persuasion, which is necessary, not only with regard to the general articles which they hold in common with others, but also with regard to those particulars, wherein they are distinguished from them; and on account of which they maintain a separate communion. Without this persuasion on scriptural grounds, their separation from the national churches or other denominations of christians, cannot be effectually justified. *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.* It is a great absurdity and iniquity to patronize or promote any separate cause, in opposition to fellow-protestants, which, we are not maturely convinced in our consciences, is the LORD'S cause. Without such a conviction, we could not consider what we do or suffer for that cause, as done or suffered for his name's sake; nor could we consistently seek or expect his blessing and countenance in such a course.

Secondly, It is necessary, in the present times, to be remembered, that *every part of the cause of God and truth*, is not only to be acknowledged, but contended for. The formal ground on which the doctrines and injunctions of the REDEEMER are to be received and contended for, is their being revealed or enjoined by the Divine Lawgiver of the church; and the formal reason, for which errors and corruptions must be testified against and purged out, is their contrariety to his will and authority. As that authority is the highest, and as it is the same in all his doctrines and injunctions, it must be an offence of the most dangerous nature to pretend to set aside that authority, or to violate it in the least as well as in the greatest. According to the loose casuistry of many teachers and professors, no truth is to be held and contended for, simply *as truth*, but only as a great and saving truth; nor any error condemned as *an error*, but because it is a great and damnable one: corruption is not to be contended against, as contrary to the word of GOD and the edification of Christ's body in its progress to perfection, but merely as inconsistent with a gracious state, and the possibility of being saved;—no matter what become of the glory of God, the honour and authority of the laws of CHRIST, the public good and purity of the church: these are small matters; but man's chief and highest end is to save his soul, and the ultimate scope of his religion is *himself*. Abominable pernicious doctrine, contrary to the answer of the first question in our Catechism, and to one of the first principles of all religion! And what scheme can be more narrow and selfish than this, with all its pretensions to uncommon charity and liberality.

The latitudinarian scheme, which prevails so much in the Protestant churches, whatever may be the views of its promoters, is plainly at war

with the principles and interests of the reformation; and, if carried to all its extent, must tend to weaken and subvert christianity itself.

"Christ's small things," said Mr. Livingston, "are great things. "It might be proved to you, that there never was a controversy since "the beginning of the world, even touching the most momentous truths, "that was not accounted a small thing, while it was an occasion of "trial."

In the *third* place, Faithful witnesses for God must pay a special attention and regard to what may be denominated, by way of distinction, the *present truth*, and exert themselves for maintaining those parts of his cause and testimony which are more immediately controverted, and chiefly opposed. We read of the present truth which christians are both to know and be established in, 2 Pet. i. 12; and *the word of CHRIST'S patience*, which some are commended for having kept, Revel. ii. 10. Whatever strikes against present error or sin; whatever is most attacked and opposed by force or fraud; that which professors are under the greatest temptation to lose or relinquish; that, for the maintaining of which, they are exposed to the greatest hardships and suffering, and to a peculiar trial of their faith and patience, may be so called. So that what has been formerly the present truth, and the word of Christ's patience, may cease to be so; and what has not hitherto been, or at present is not, may become such hereafter. There is no article, whether relating to the appointed faith, worship, government, discipline, or manners of the christian church, but may, in its turn, become thus eminently distinguished. Paul terms that, for which he was presently suffering imprisonment at Rome, *the testimony of our Lord Jesus*, 2 Tim. i. 8. John applies the same expression to the cause of his banishment to the isle of Patmos, and afterwards to the particular causes of contending and suffering under antichrist, Revel. i. 2, 9. xii. 17. Hence it is easy to see, though many consider it as a paradox, that there may be multitudes of professors, and many real saints among them too, when yet Christ's witnesses may be few, very few. Churches and professors therein may retain many great and precious articles of the christian profession; and yet the testimony of Jesus, in this view of it, may be wanting among them. If a man were called to bear witness in a litigated cause, though he should speak truth in all other points, yet if he contradicted it in the single point in debate, or if he withheld his evidence, or could say nothing to the purpose relative to the present matter in question, his testimony would go for nothing. Thus, though persons should be faithful in many things, and orthodox in a thousand articles; yet if they be not so in those which are presently contested, or take a wrong side, were it but in one point, on which, as on a hinge, the testimony for the time turns, they must hereby lose the honour of being faithful witnesses, or helpers of the cause of God, in the manner in which it is then stated, and in the precise points to which it is then in a manner reduced. What praise is it for a man to hold fast what none attempts to take from him? To testify where there is no strife; to contend where there is no antagonist or quarrel; or to carry on a vigorous war in a time of profound peace, sounds very like a contradiction in terms.

Fourthly, It is the duty of such as are contending for truth and reformation, to take the Lord's own ways for promoting his service, such ways as he himself appoints and approves. They must be attentive to walk *in plain paths, because of observers.* They are restricted to the use of such methods and means only as are warrantable and proper; and the use of any other must tend rather to mar and disgrace, than advance the cause that is Divine; which has no need either of the inventions or corruptions of men to be called in to its aid. His work is to be advanced by those means only that are conformable to its nature. The goodness of the cause or of the intention will not sanctify any unwarrantable mean. When David and his company put the ark into a cart to bring it into its place, they intended to do it honour; yet the manner in which it was done displeased the Lord: and when Uzzah, out of pious concern for the ark, put forth his hand and touched it, when it shook by the stumbling of the oxen, the Lord smote him, and made a breach among the people; because all this was seeking him out of the due order. *Not by might nor by power*, much less by dishonest wiles and stratagems, or wicked Machiavelian politics, is the cause of true religion and righteousness to be maintained and propagated in the earth. All deceit, fraud, injustice, wrath, bitterness, railing, evil surmising, detraction and evil-speakings, are to be laid aside, as utterly improper, having nothing to do in any cause that is the Lord's. Those, who have received the ministry, ought especially, in imitation of the holy apostles, *to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty* in all their proceedings, *not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, recommending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

Fifthly, Zeal for the glory of God, and the interests of religion, becomes all who have espoused his cause. These are objects which deserve to be promoted with the utmost earnestness and fervency of spirit. The Redeemer hath expressed the highest disgust with those who are neither cold nor hot; and to such he says, *Be zealous and repent.* This duty stands opposed to that indolent and neutral frame of heart, which makes persons neglect, or coldly improve opportunities of doing good, and disposes them passively and tamely to suffer the progress of evil. There are indeed frequent instances of a blind, partial, imprudent, and furious zeal, with which some have been affected but not well; but this is no reason for condemning or exploding that which is enlightened, regulated, uniform, disinterested, and upright. The danger of a false and unscriptural zeal should teach us to take heed what manner of spirit we are of, and to be well informed and assured of the cause in which we engage: but when these are duly attended to, what can be more reasonable, more conducive to public good, more becoming the christian profession, more conformably to scriptural examples, more Christ-like and God-like, than to be exceedingly jealous for the LORD GOD OF HOSTS, and keen in opposition to those evils which dishonour his name, and injure his interests and people? Shall this be reckoned bigotry, rage, or enthusiasm? Let the *Gallios* of the world, the graceless and disaffected, call it so, if they please; but the friends of religion, instead of being ashamed, have cause to glory in such a temper and spirit; and may say, as the

king of Israel, when upbraided for rejoicing publicly before the ark, *I will be yet more vile than this.* What? shall men be eager about their own little temporal affairs, and so cool and negligent about the great things of God? Do they well to be angry, and angry sometimes even unto death, when they meet with personal injuries and affronts? and have they no resentment nor grief to spare, when the MOST HIGH is insulted, and the steps of his ANOINTED reproached? Shall the LORD'S enemies be all diligence and activity, and his helpers remiss and slack? Shall some venture to break down and undo the carved work of Zion with axes and hammers, while the professed friends of that work will scarce move a finger, or lift up a tool for repairing the sanctuary? Or while the former roar and rage like bears, shall the latter only tremble and mourn sore like doves?

Sixthly, It is necessary for such as come forth on the Lord's side against the mighty to have an undaunted christian resolution, and a holy, not presumptuous, boldness. They who engage in warlike enterprises, must not shrink from difficulties, nor tremble at dangers. The faithful witnesses of Jesus engage in a most arduous and perilous conflict. They must resolve to run all hazards in adhering to the cause of their LORD; they must be willing, as good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST, to endure hardship, to suffer the loss of all things; not fainting under their daily cross, nor scrupling even resistance unto blood, *striving against sin;* being ready, *not only to be bound, but to die*, for the name of the Lord Jesus; not counting even life dear, that they may finish their course with joy. If they have an impudent and hardened generation of men to deal with, inflexibly defending their heinous errors and backslidings, and obstinately resisting the truth; they must not be afraid of their faces, but make *their foreheads hard against their foreheads;* standing as *an iron pillar and a brazen wall* against them; opposing their groundless presumption with well founded confidence; their ferocity with true christian courage, tempered with meekness; their obstinacy in evil with a wise and enlightened zeal and an unshaken adherence to a good cause; their insolent threatening with a holy and silent contempt; and their carnal boasting with the heroic triumphs of faith.

Seventhly, Fidelity, constancy, and persevering patience are required of such as have appeared on the Lord's side in an evil time. Many give striking evidences of cold indifference to the cause of God and truth, for which they once contended with much ardour. There are few, very few, whose last works are found to exceed their first. *But he who endureth to the end shall be saved.* Our LORD has therefore repeated that charge to each of the churches, *Be thou faithful unto death;* and nothing is more frequently enjoined in scripture, than *to stand fast* and *hold fast.* Those, who have opened their mouth to the Lord, cannot, must not go back. They who enlist under his banner must never desire a discharge in that war. The term of their engagement is till death. Though those who seem to be pillars should reel and shake; though stars of the first magnitude should fall; though standard-bearers should faint; though ministers or saints of the greatest usefulness and eminence should drop one after another; though ever so many draw back, they must not reckon themselves at liberty to do so. No occurrences in providence; no examples; no prevailing

power of temptation; no degree of suffering, can at any time excuse a shameful defection from or indifference in his cause.

All this is come upon us, said the faithful of old, yet have we not forgotten thee, nor have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way, though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death, Psal. xliv. 17, 18, 19, 22.

Some have opened their mouths, and subscribed with their hands to the LORD, in a manner the most express and solemn. They have called heaven and earth to record, that "they shall not give up themselves to a detestable indifferency and neutrality in the cause of GOD; but denying themselves and their own things, they shall above all things seek the honour of God, and the good of his cause and people." And has the GOD of hosts heard these vows, and will he not enquire after the performance or the breach of them? Shall men break their covenant with God, and escape?

Eighthly, Such as have associated together to promote the cause of God, are strictly bound to maintain *unity and harmony among themselves*, and to guard carefully against all unseemly contentions and pernicious divisions. Amidst all our regard and zeal, we must not forget what is due to peace. The wisdom that is from above is peaceable as well as pure. The followers of Christ are enjoined, so far as in them lies, *to live peaceably with all men;* and they are especially under the strictest obligations to cultivate peace among themselves. *Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* Animosities and divisions dishearten the friends even of a good cause, damping, if not extinguishing the fervour of public spirit. What advantages, what matter of triumph, have the contentions of the Lord's witnesses among themselves afforded to their adversaries! These contentions also furnish the neutral and indifferent with a plausible, though in itself indeed a very weak, plea for not appearing on the side of (what they cannot deny to be) the LORD'S cause, that its professed adherents are not agreed or at one among themselves. These contentions prove offensive and an occasion of stumbling to the weak. Many sigh and go backward; while others are put to a painful silence, and have their minds filled with discouraging reflections. *For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart.* Not as if all strivings, or even separations, were unwarrantable or prejudicial to the LORD'S cause: In many cases, they may be necessary means for its maintenance; nor as if any sinful compliances were ever allowable to prevent disturbances; or any bonds between men or christians so sacred, as not to yield to the superior force of truth and duty. But the unity of the Spirit ought to be kept in the bond of peace. Nothing is more contrary to the gospel, than implacable animosities, personal quarrels and resentments, a schismatical spirit, and causeless divisions; such as too often abound even under the specious pretence of conscience and singular faithfulness. The apostle enjoins us to mark those who cause divisions, and avoid them. All who truly wish well to Jerusalem should ever earnestly pray for, and assiduously promote peace within her walls; and, in so doing, they seek her felicity.

Finally, It is especially the duty of such as are maintaining the distinguishing profession of a zealous adherence to the cause of truth and reformation, to adorn the doctrine of GOD their Saviour, and that holy profession by *a suitable life and conversation*. No system of truth however pure, no belief however orthodox, no pretensions to zeal and public spirit, can ever compensate for the want of the fruits of holiness, so glorifying to God, and so profitable to men. A man's faith must be shewn and justified by his works, and by works must faith be made perfect. There is no method so effectual to justify a good profession before the world, as that of a good life. Mankind are ever readier to form their opinion of any profession by the lives and actions of those who adhere to it, than by examining the truth or falsehood of its principles. It is indeed naturally and reasonably expected, that they who profess more than others, should also do more than others. This being the case, professors should be more on their guard, and should endeavour, by well doing, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. *True Patriotism, pages* 151—180.

FINIS.

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ERRATA.

The numbering of the lines is from the head of the page, unless where it is directed to be from the foot.

Page.	Line.	
4	2	for *these* read *which*.
9	10	from the foot—after *that* r. *act*.
14	32	for *visibly* r. *visible*.
19	38	for *Episcopus* r. *Episcopius*.
42	9	for *Jusus* r. *Jesus*.
60	4	from the foot—for the period at *affair* put a comma.
—		In the next line—for *more* r. *longer*.
69	12	before *any* r. *in*.
—	31	for *scriptural* r. *spiritual*.
74	33	for *of the truth* r. *for the truth*.
79	14	for *tends* r. *tending*.
89	11	for *Ærius* r. *Aerius*.
—	17	for *Pacclinus* r. *Paulinus*.
—	19	for *Theodolies* r. *Theodotus*.
100	3	from the foot—for *cæturos* r. *cæteros*.
101	5	from the foot—for *cresendo* r. *crescendo*.
104	13	from the foot—before *quos* r. *penes*.
119	2	from the foot—for *inficire* r. *inficere*.
120	8	from the foot—r. *ob doctrinæ suæ HOMOPSEPHIAN* cum scripturis sacris, ob PHANEROSIN.
123	8	from the foot—for *usitate* r. *usitata*.
131	1	for *this* r. *the*.
133	6	from the foot—for *experimendam* r. *exprimendam*.
—	2	from the foot—for *cui cæteri* r. *cui cætui*.
—	–	and for *ibid.* r. *syntagmatis prima parte*.
134	12	for *Popish* r. *Polish*.
—	16	for *determined* r. *determinate*.
138	12	from the foot—insert *furnished* before *by their*.
—	13	for *an example* r. *a sample*.
157	7	from the foot—for *persons were* r. *persons who were*.
—	5	from the foot—for *this scheme of the catholic* r. *the scheme of catholic*.
158	3	from the foot—for the point of interrogation put a semicolon.
173	31	for *catholic* r. *public*.
174	11	in the first note—for *evissima* r. *levissima*.
228	7	from the foot—for *ancestor* r. *ancestors*.

Page.	Line.	
235	8	for *retrogade* r. *retrograde.*
240	29	for *right* r. *rite.*
244	4 from the foot—	before *is* r. *he.*
245	1	for *a natural* r. *his natural.*
—	7	for *sins* r. *sin.*
252	10, 15	for *hypothesis* r. *hypotheses.*
272	11	for *exonor* r. *exoner.*
278	8 from the foot—	before *the essence* r. *of.*
298	9 from the foot—	after *Immanuel* put a *semicolon.*
302	18	for *united in* r. *united to.*
—	21	before *grace* put *the.*
—	8 from the foot—	after *and* insert *that.*
328	8 from the foot—	for *Hymenus* r. *Hymeneus.*
343	9 in the note—	for *from* r. *by.*
346	5	for *as taught* r. *is taught.*
369	at the end of the last line put a point of interrogation.	
370	1	for *is* r. *may be.*
371	6	for *of burgess oaths* r. *of some burgess oaths.*
394	29	for *paschel* r. *paschal.*
—	31	for *four* r. *fore.*
416	8 from the foot—	for *insiduous* r. *insidious.*
425	15	for *would the inhabitants* r. *should the inhabitants.*
428	5 from the foot—	for *immitent* r. *eminent.*